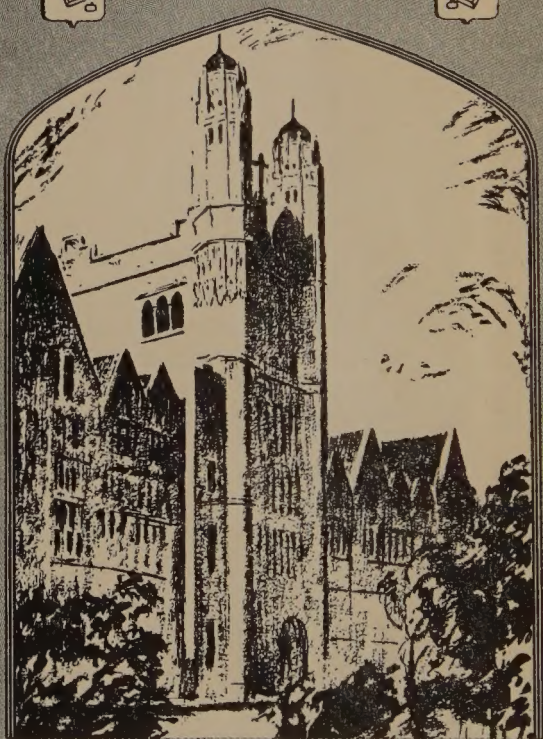




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**ST. TERESA**

1928

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ST. TERESA



## CHAPTER I

### "From Quiet Homes and First Beginnings"

BEHIND the shutters of an old Fortress House in Avila at the hour of dawn, on March 28th, 1515, there came into the world one of the keenest, perhaps the most insatiable, of life's explorers. Teresa Cepeda y Ahumada, daughter of Alonso Sanchez de Cepeda and Beatriz his wife, of a long Castilian line, lived to be sixty-seven years of age. Her body was always feeble, the imperfect scabbard that fretted, while it spared, the flaming sword of her vitality; but neither weariness nor pain could stem the current of her will, curb the driving force of a personality that wore agony and sweat as a *panache*.

That quality of curiosity which marks man from the beast, the desire to test the

sum of human experience, uncover the avenues of human thought, was present in Teresa to a high degree. She was possessed by the passion for discovery, using herself—sensitive body, keen mind—to register impressions. But—and this marks her unique among women—Teresa never accepted the conclusions of to-day as sufficing for the morrow, always she desired to know more, to feel more, to extend and extend the limits of her horizon, to gauge her opinions by their continual application.

The significance of Teresa's life lies surely in its amazing and unceasing youth. That hardening process which often attacks the virile mind after its first pliancy never in her case set in. Her divine, her unappeasable curiosity leaps at you from her letters, looks at you from her eyes, luminous, commanding even in her picture. The heavy complacency of middle age never touched this ardent spirit; age in her case was indeed mere unrelated fact, the number of her years was interesting merely as a sign-post on the road of development.

In our day, and to the same extent, this



is equally true of Bernard Shaw. Every decade in his life has marked a shedding of outworn prejudices, outgrown nostrums, a new burgeoning of ideas, a fresh blossoming of comprehension.

There is this also in common between the Irish genius and the Spanish Saint: neither of them ever pointed out a path that they themselves left untrod. Both practised an austerity undreamt of by the common man, but neither suggested its enforcement upon any other.

These two great figures, the fervent Catholic, the fastidious Protestant, can join hands across the centuries in their persistent hunger for experience, their relentless courage toward life. Each soul flourishes best in its fit soil, and the end for all is surely the attainment of an increasing and eternal growth. . . .

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Native to a country where the most cultured minds, tinged with the Eastern doctrine of woman's innate inferiority, not only discount the qualities of feminine genius, but actually deny them, Teresa de Jesus, by sheer

strength of purpose, became the credited leader of a movement that shocked the whole monastic system throughout Spain to fresh vitality. In an age when, surfeited with tribute gold from her colonies, Spain was gradually tending to measure men by their money, she proclaimed the strength, the power, the beauty of penury; like a trumpet call her summons opened the gates of castle, cottage and convent, and there streamed forth a host of rich and poor alike eagerly stripped of their possessions, pledged to a life of needy toil. Owning nothing, in no way cumbered by debt, some of the greatest minds joined the standard of Teresa—the standard that proclaimed the tyranny of great possessions, the abiding freedom of perpetual poverty.

How did she attain this strange supremacy in the teeth of national prejudice? How did she force her amazing doctrine of the power of poverty on the rigid traditions of her race? The story of Teresa, the tempering of her genius, the fashioning of that subtle blade, her mind, her final attainment of an authority persistent to this day, is one of the most

triumphant chapters in the history of woman.

We hear much to-day of the far-reaching effects of feminine achievement in things political and social; but now, when every door is open to us and the whole world lies before us where to choose, the tale of what we have accomplished in this, the golden age of our emancipation, fades into insignificance beside the epic of this sixteenth century figure, who from the shuttered security of Spain quickened the whole of Christendom, instituted the most practical, as the most spiritual of reforms and left her impress for all time on European thought.

\*

Teresa's childhood was passed in the sombre house that saw her birth. She grew up in an atmosphere instinct with austerity and loveliness—twin threads that dominated her life throughout. The living rooms, as in all Southern climates, were sparsely furnished. There was little beyond the great leather chairs and huge oak chests, used for the most part as benches. But, in glowing contrast to this gaunt

simplicity, the walls were hung with joyous tapestries, mellow curtains of soft leather; silver lamps, exquisitely wrought, shed a soft light on the old roof, inlaid with delicate ivories, miraculously carved by Moorish craftsmen. The outer walls massive, impregnable, had the grim strength of a fortress designed to resist the attacks of an insurgent foe. But in the great courtyard, round which the house was built, a slender vine clung to the grey stones, and the severity of the great galleries was tempered by gracious columns, each with its fantastic capital.

The household, like the house, showed the same mixture of graciousness and rigour. Alonso, in his right of husband and father, held undisputed control over his wife and family. It was a combination of feudal custom and patriarchal authority under which the individual was completely subordinate to the head of the house. Alonso belonged to the small nobility, who, proud to remain untitled, were deeply rooted in chivalrous tradition. One sees him as a man of fastidious rectitude, with but little humour and slightly over-



weighted by the memory of his forbears, who inch by inch had won their country from the Moors. Over-conscious, perhaps, that it devolved on him to carry on the immaculate tradition, there was no cause for him to earn fresh laurels, but in preparation perhaps for campaigns to come he begat nine sons and three daughters between his two wives.

He had, however, other interests. The Fortress House contained a rare library, which included the work of religion, exquisite missals, theological tomes, innumerable lives of the Saints, and—the softer strain again—a unique collection of those books of mediæval knight-errantry which combined a fine idealism with the robust humour and frankness of expression summoned up as Rabelaisian. Alonso does not seem to have been personally drawn toward these intriguing tales. He preferred the Saints. It was his wife, the shadowy Doña Beatriz, who feverishly devoured them. Beatriz was related to Alonso's first wife within the prohibited degrees and a dispensation was necessary before a marriage could take place.

It was a pale life she led, poor lady. Per-

petual childbirth, weak health and complete subservience to her lord left her but little liberty. But what she had she took with breathless haste. How eagerly that frail wraith of womanhood must have seized on the rosy rapture of romance. Behold her creeping from the nursery, diaphanous in her grey remoteness, to the hidden volume. The colour flushes her cheeks as she reads of hopeless love and burning passion. Just for a little while she is back once more in the garden of youth. . . . Poor Doña Beatriz, she was held in tender memory by her daughter: "Of great beauty, which she was never known to prize; very gentle and of good abilities, and although she was only thirty-three when she died, her dress was that of one already advanced in years. Great were the sufferings she passed through while she lived; she died the most Christian death."\*

Thirty-three—and in the few short years of her married life she bore Alonso seven sons and two daughters, of which Teresa was the elder.

It was to her father that the girl's admira-

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\*"The Life of St. Teresa," by herself.

tion turned. His lack of humour was discounted in her young mind by his dignity of carriage, his melancholy, autocratic face, his strict observance of all the duties and all the privileges of his seigneurial rank. Teresa was his favourite child, and he seems early to have recognised her qualities of brain and character. Apart from his position as feudal lord, Alonso seems to have realised the ethical value of freedom. Teresa tells us that he was "of great charity toward the poor and compassionate on the sick and for servants; so much so that he could never be persuaded to keep slaves, for he pitied them so much: and a slave belonging to one of his brothers being once in his house, was treated by him with as much tenderness as his own children. He used to say that he could not endure the pain of seeing that she was not free. He was a man of great truthfulness; nobody ever heard him swear or speak ill of anyone; his life was most pure."

And yet despite his courteous excellence and general dignity, it was not, I think, the forerunner of Sir Austen Feverel who most

deeply influenced the trend of Teresa's life. She always responded to the masculine, her intellect was of the fibre that marks the logician. Her temperament glowed with adventurous appetite. She was the accepted comrade of her brothers, the boon companion of their games, the participator in the thousand mimic fights between the Spaniard and the Moor, played out in the great courtyard or in those shadowy gaunt rooms, softened with gentle hangings.

But through all those happy days of running wild, Teresa, questioning and alert, must sometimes have realised that with the days of her youth, the days of her freedom must indubitably end. The glowing eyes of the girl, at that time resilient in health and spirits, must have darkened at a future unexpectedly glimpsed. Beatriz also had been beautiful and young and ardent—once—and at three and thirty, under the kindly Alonso, who exacted an unremitting toll of annual children, she was elderly—all but old.

Always mentally excursive even as a child, it is possible that Teresa felt at moments the rigidity of a marriage which turned maternity



from woman's highest privilege into a recurrent, almost a mechanical obligation. It may be that something of this coloured her outlook long before she contemplated a conventual life. For though, like all spirits of high metal, she inevitably reacted to discipline, however severe, it had to be a discipline that she herself interiorly accepted. She never placidly conformed to rules imposed from without. An enforced subjugation was utterly alien to a nature whose apotheosis was a free renunciation.

Alone in those vast rooms, hiding for a breath from her playmates, did she ever visualise herself, bowed down with feudal burdens; the wings of her spirit clipped, the avenues of her imagination barred and bolted, denied those lightening passages to liberty that Beatriz contrived, that freedom of escape from the grim house to the green hillside, a freedom of which we may be sure the excellent Alonso knew but very little?

It was while she was yet quite small that Teresa embarked on an adventure which suggests a very definite antagonism to routine domesticity. Beatriz always shared her beloved

romances with the children. Harassed and careworn, the ailing woman welcomed the quiet that always followed her narration of the adventures of some famous knight. Knight and saint jostled each other in the imaginative excursions of the family. Alonso would read in his cultured, toneless voice the sufferings of St. Lawrence. That same afternoon, Beatriz would tell of the gallantry of a youth bearing the same name. What wonder, then, that martyrs and mercenaries, sinners and the beatified, mingled inextricably in the kaleidoscope of the child's mind? Fired with adventure, resentful, perhaps, of rules and regulations in the making of which she had no part, life in the Fortress House became suddenly insupportable to the young person. At the advanced age of six, with Rodrigo, her beloved brother, four years older than herself, Teresa set out for the undiscovered country of her desire—"The lands of the Moors—begging our way for the love of God—there to be beheaded."

The story of the children's journey is bitten deep in the chronicles of the time. The two little

creatures, Teresa with all the seriousness of a romantic heroine, in the stiff garments of the period, urging Rodrigo from behind, crept out of the courtyard, down the jagged street toward the narrow, high-pitched bridge on the other side of the town—from there to seek a swift and glorious ending. Undoubtedly they both desired dragons, flaming swords, not to mention racks and thumb-screws. But the cloudless sky beheld no deed of doom. Hot and hungry—the provisions had given out on the way—but still high in endeavour, the runaways were captured at the spot where four granite pillars commemorate the victory of the Cross over the Crescent. There they were seen by their uncle, who promptly took them home and Doña Beatriz met them in the courtyard, distraught with fear that they had fallen down a well! So, at least, she told Alonso. How she must have envied her two adventurers!

Rodrigo, tackled on the exploit, fell back upon the excuse of Adam. It was, he explained, his sister's fault, the "niña" was to blame. How vividly the "niña" comes before

us. Her slim body, taut with energy, her eyes ablaze, her lovely and most eloquent little hands curving with eagerness at the thought of a triumphant execution. Small boys to-day as in the sixteenth century are keen to become pirates, or even executioners. It is, however, with difficulty that they can be persuaded that to lose their own life is the better part. But Teresa was to preach crusades fully as astonishing, and, like her young brother, those to whom she spoke followed, over the stoniest road to the most distant goal!

Teresa's childhood was a happy, vivid period. She was rooted in family affection—an affection which only ended with her life. In the great courtyard she and Rodrigo held tournaments, were burnt at the stake, rescued lovely ladies and renounced the world! Tired of play, she would slip off to the lives of the saints, or the exploits of a sinner, the carved figures in the roof, beautiful, grotesque, menacing and tender, far above her sleek black head. In after years, when practice had perfected a rare power of discrimination, Teresa from her convent depicts the small child:—

"I gave alms as I could; and I could but little. I contrived to be alone for the sake of my prayers, and they were many; especially the Rosary, to which my mother had a great devotion and had made us also in this, like herself. I was not disposed to murmur, or to speak ill of others, nor does it seem to me I could dislike another, nor was I covetous. . . ."

Thus streamed on the life of the Cepeda household, when to the great surprise of Don Alonso, Beatriz, having come to the conclusion that as wife and mother she had done her duty, decided to lay down and die.

## CHAPTER II

### "The Thoughts of Youth"

THE death of Doña Beatriz was the first break in Teresa's life. Her childhood, with its eager interests, multi-coloured joys and poignant little agonies, ended at the age of twelve. Doña Beatriz seems to have died with very little fuss. Her tired eyes, that for the last time glimpsed the distant hills, must have closed strangely content to know her long-drawn suffering had ended. We have no record of her dying words, but as she lay there, pressed down by her short and heavy life, she must have found some solace in the child of her youth—Teresa; in whom the suppressions she had practised were released, the longings she had stifled freed.

The girl was a glowing creature at this time, tall and of slender figure, with expressive



eyes and a well-shaped, humorous mouth; her smile flashed suddenly like sunshine, her laugh was so spontaneous that gaiety surrounded her. Her chroniclers lay stress on her lovely little hands, the filbert nails and taper fingers that retained their beauty throughout life and after death. Full of vitality, with a personal magnetism that made itself acutely felt, her radiance must have held her mother's dying eyes. . . . Let us hope that Don Alonso did not intercept the vision.

Just what her mother meant in the scheme of things was only apparent to Teresa after the poor lady's death. Beatriz had softened the rigours of the family yoke. She had unlocked the secret garden of romance for her small daughter, had aided and abetted those excursions with Rodrigo which vexed the soul of Don Alonso. Hers was a sweet discipline, bulwark rather than a barrier, and the girl's first feeling was one of frightened loneliness. Instinctively she rushed out of the house, taking refuge in the small chapel where six years before she had knelt with Rodrigo, asking a blessing on their march to martyr-

dom. She tells the story in simple, graphic words:—

“As I began to realise what I had lost, I went in my affliction to the image of Our Lady and with many tears supplicated her to be my Mother. . . .”

She had need of love and understanding, our poor Teresa, in the next few years.

It was Maria, Don Alonso's eldest daughter and Teresa's step-sister, who took charge of the family in place of Doña Beatriz. She was a painfully earnest young woman, intensely conscious of her own moral rectitude and slightly suspicious of her sister's. Teresa, sensitive, impressionable, was a sealed book to Maria, who promptly put a stop to those journeyings into the country which Doña Beatriz had contrived. Apart from saying “No,” she does not seem to have done very much for the girl. Complacently occupied with arrangements for her approaching marriage, she may be excused for failure to establish confidence between herself and Teresa; in any case she was of a commonplace calibre, incapable of finer understanding. What, however, one re-

sents is the intrusion on the innocent freedom of her charge, an intrusion which later thrust Teresa into unlooked-for intimacy with an outsider. . . .

The first result of the alteration in the household was to send our heroine with increased avidity to the reading of romance. She had loved to listen to her mother's stories, but now she plunged, heart and soul, into the old volumes. She had a rare capacity of seizing on the essentials of a book as of a person. She could tear the heart out of a novel or a treatise, add up the qualities of an ascetic or a soldier in a flash. She gathered from her intensive reading a variegation of vocabulary, an appreciation of colour, a perception of fluency that moulded her literary style, and gave her a practised ease in the Castilian tongue, as spoken by the people, which stood her in good stead years later.

Fired by the desire to create a knight of her own imagining, Teresa with the collaboration of Rodrigo—who always lagged a thought behind—wrote a story of fabulous deeds and heroic impulses, which proved a great success. St. Ribera, the scholarly Jesuit and faithful

chronicler, who at seventy-five wrote the Saint's biography, from material collected during her life, speaks in high praise of the romance:—"So striking was her genius, so forcible her style—she was saturated with knight errantry—that the book roused great attention."

Consider the phenomenon! A girl at the threshold of her teens writing a romance, to public acclamation, in a country where women were considered duly equipped for educational purposes if they could stumble over a book of prayers!

It is pleasing to see how perfectly Teresa turned this prentice venture to account. The trenchant pen that wrote the "Life," which is and must remain ageless as its author, first learnt its craft from a venture in knight-errantry. All was grist to Teresa's mill. Every kind of experience, from small and piercing joys to uplifting hope and shattering agony, went to the making of the saint who was to stir the world. It was given to her to feel, to see, to apprehend more in an hour than others gather in a whole existence.

The writing of her novel seems to have quickened Teresa's apprehension in all directions. She awoke suddenly to a knowledge of sex; she discovered she had the power to move men; that she not only had beauty, but wit, could rouse admiration and inspire friendship. In the direct and fluid style of which she was a master, she paints her picture for us:—

“I began to make much of dress, to wish to please others by my appearance. I took pains with my hands and my hair, used perfumes and all vanities within my reach—and they were many, for I was very much given to them. I had no evil intention because I never wished anyone to offend God for me. This fastidiousness of excessive neatness lasted some years, and so also did other practices, which I thought then were not at all sinful. Now I see how wrong all this must have been.”

Scent, powder, cosmetics—joys of vanity were later utterly put aside. Teresa, in her fastidious rectitude, felt they were obstacles to the selflessness of spirit at which she aimed.

And yet she does not put a disproportionate value on their allure. She knows too well those first delightful follies that hold youth.

Meanwhile Teresa had plenty of opportunity to test her powers of fascination, for the Fortress House was suddenly full of young men. It is true that Spanish etiquette and the feudal system required the said young men to establish claims of consanguinity to secure admittance, but cousins, even to the third and fourth degree, are not the less impressionable, and remembering Teresa's loveliness of person and brilliance of mind, we may imagine the number of collateral branches that suddenly spread from the Cepeda tree.

Teresa responded to the new atmosphere, full of light and gaiety. She became the idol of the set, the centre of a happy, laughing crowd, filling the old rooms with colour, movement and young pleasure:—

“These cousins,” she tells us, “were nearly of mine own age, or a little older, perhaps. We were always together; and they had a great affection for me. In everything that gave them pleasure I kept the conversation alive



—listened to the stories of their affections and childish follies.”

Teresa turned to the affection of her kinsmen with a wistful content. The family had already commenced to break up. Her elder brothers, adopting the profession of arms, had sailed for the American colonies; her beloved Rodrigo was on the eve of departure, and Maria's placid egoism destroyed all possibility of companionship. Teresa's attraction must have annoyed and bewildered the young woman. We can imagine the criticism in her cold eye, which for all its searching could never detect the slightest breach of manner, the least flaw in breeding of her young sister.

But for all her appreciation of masculine society, Teresa seems to have longed for a woman friend, to whom she could confide the first shy secrets of adolescence, sharing romance and admiration. She found what she wanted in a relation of her mother's. Doña Beatriz had never cared for this particular individual, and had discouraged her visits. Nevertheless, she had endured the woman's society in the home because, as

Teresa naïvely puts it: "so many were the excuses she found for being there."

A parasite, undoubtedly, this relation seems to have had certain social qualities. She was a genial soul, no longer young, but with a mature attraction, all the tact of her type and with sufficient shrewdness to realise Teresa's possibilities. She became the girl's confidant, listening in silent appreciation to the tales of lover-like attentions, always ready with the right word, the quick encouragement. Not by any means actively corrupt, but desperately anxious to secure the fast-vanishing luxuries she had once hoped marriage would secure—only let Teresa get a fine house of her own, and a comfortable future loomed ahead for the faithful dependant.

Teresa admits the lady was extremely light and frivolous, but goes on to say: "I was very fond of her society, I gossiped and talked with her. She helped me in all the amusements I liked, and what is more, found some for me, and communicated to me her own conversations and vanities."

The "amusements" mentioned we may

gather was the lady's connivance in secret meetings between Teresa and a young gallant a few years her senior. Teresa, innocent as a flower, took fire at his glances, his words winged with all the passion flaming in the Spanish heart. We can see the two young things clasping hands in a dim old room, meeting in the garden in the scented darkness, with the poor relation playing sentinel. Teresa was awake to all the glory of her womanhood and all the magic of his manhood. A very rose of love, her deep-set eyes glowed with the knowledge she was worshipped. She tells us of this passage in her life from her convent cell; with that genius for the intimate that bridges time and space, she conjures up that ardent, far-off figure. She views the peccadilloes of the young Teresa with a rare understanding: she realises the significance to the young girl of all that the woman by deliberate choice relinquished, and though, as the dedicate of Christ, she regards earthly desires as barriers between her soul and its fulfilment, she is still moved by affection and, more important, by justice toward the maiden of the long ago. She is explicit in her

statement that the girl's love was imprudent but not guilty, save in the sense that it turned her soul from God.

Picture the fragile figure wan with fasting, wasted with prayer, straining back toward the ghost of a fragrant girlhood. This is Teresa's story of her association with the parasite, which led to her first and only love affair:—

“Until I knew her, I mean, until she became friendly with me, and communicated to me her own affairs—I was then about fourteen years old, a little more, I think—I do not believe that I turned away from God in mortal sin, or lost the fear of Him, though I had a greater fear of disgrace. This latter fear had such sway over me, that I never wholly forfeited my good name—and, as to that, there was nothing in the world for which I would have bartered it, and nobody in the world I liked well enough who could have persuaded me to do it. Thus I might have had the strength never to do any thing against the honour of God, as I had it by nature not to fail in that wherein I thought the honour of the world consisted; and I never observed that I was failing in many other ways. In vainly seeking after it I was extremely careful; but in the use of the means

necessary for preserving it I was utterly careless. I was anxious only not to be lost altogether.

This friendship distressed my father and sister exceedingly. They often blamed me for it; but, as they could not hinder that person from coming into the house, all their efforts were in vain; for I was very adroit in doing anything that was wrong. Now and then, I am amazed at the evil one bad companion can do—nor could I believe it, if I did not know it by experience—especially when we are young: then is it that the evil must be greatest. . . . So it was; the conversation of this person so changed me, that no trace was left of my soul's natural disposition to virtue, and I became a reflection of her and of another who was given to the same kind of amusements."

Teresa's little love affair was carefully kept from Don Alonso and the impeccable Maria by the aid of the parasite. The secrecy which weighed on the girl's mind seems to have been the only undesirable part of the affair, and we may suppose that had her sister been more human and less granitic it would not have remained clandestine. Nevertheless, Maria, who had never tried to gain her sister's confidence, resented it being given to another.

She seems to have complained to Don Alonso, who tried to separate Teresa from the poor relation:—

“In the beginning, these conversations did me harm—I believe so. The fault was perhaps not hers, but mine; for afterwards my own wickedness was enough to lead me astray together with the servants about me, whom I found ready enough for all evil. If any one of these had given me good advice, I might perhaps have profited by it; but they were blinded by interest, as I was by passion. . . . Afterwards, when the fear of God had utterly departed from me, the fear of dishonour alone remained, and was a torment to me in all I did. When I thought that nobody would ever know, I ventured upon many things that were neither honourable nor pleasing unto God.”

This is quite clearly the language of exaggeration, the Saint's view of a venial sin. But, and this is characteristic, she tempers her judgment and makes it plain just how and where her young self was to blame:—

“Still, I was never inclined to much evil,—for I hated naturally anything dishonourable—but only to the amusement of a pleasant



conversation. The occasion of sin, however, being present, danger was at hand, and I exposed to it my father and brothers. God delivered me out of it all, so that I should not be lost, in a manner visibly against my will, yet not so secretly as to allow me to escape without the loss of my good name and the suspicions of my father."

It was a difficult question for Don Alonso to tackle. Had he known officially of the flirtation, he must have acted according to his patriarchal lights and punished Teresa severely. As it was, he had only Maria's suspicions and his own fears to go upon. Moreover, he had a real affection for his young daughter and a great pride in her attainments. He therefore took occasion by the hand to arrange for Teresa to leave home. Maria's marriage formed the excuse. It would not have been convenient for a girl to remain in the Fortress House unchaperoned—the mere idea conjured up the parasite firmly ensconced on the family hearth.

It was decided that the girl should go to the Convent of the Augustinians, where

forty nuns presided over the education and deportment of the daughters of the local gentry. It was a terrible wrench to Teresa to leave her home, but she made no rebellion. She had a quiet dignity that always bowed to the inevitable. The poor child recognised the power of facts, she knew that this brief chapter of romance was ended.

The episode with the handsome cousin marked the change from the girl to the woman. She blossomed very quickly into physical and mental maturity. She had tasted passion and knew intuitively its possibilities; and knowing, decided to pass on. She had had her experience. There was no need of repetition.

Nevertheless, she went to the convent, if outwardly calm, interiorly seething.

### CHAPTER III

“Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees”

It is one of the saddest landmarks of life when for the first time we find ourselves cut loose from a familiar setting, faced by alien standards, unknown possibilities, called on to choose between social obliteration or the assertion of a definite, often a difficult individuality. To Teresa, fresh from the warm affection of her home, the convent must have seemed curiously aloof. In the Fortress House she had flowered under the kindly warmth of recognition; in the Augustinian sisterhood of Santa Maria de Gracia, she was an unfamiliar proposition, her thoughts, desires, affections and ambitions regarded from an unimpassioned angle that to the young and ardent creature must have seemed implacable.

Never before had Teresa been thrust right back on herself; hitherto she had been the

favoured playmate, the adored leader, the beloved daughter—or the suspected sister. Now the old familiar faces, the accredited judgments, were left behind. She was in a new world, stripped of external vanities, external values, with only her personality to stand on.

She must have endured much in the first days of her retreat. Unsatisfied passion, uneasy self-conceit, the fear lest the Sisters should guess the real reason of her exile, must have torn at her heart. And then—as always—she calmly accepted facts, and having accepted, moulded her life to include them:—

“For the first eight days I suffered much; but more from the suspicion that my vanity was known, than from being in the monastery; for I was already weary of myself—and, though I offended God, I never ceased to have a great fear of Him, and contrived to go to confession as quickly as I could. I was very uncomfortable; but within eight days, I think sooner, I was much more contented than I had been in my father’s house. All the nuns were pleased with me; for the Lord had given me the grace to please everyone

wherever I might be. I was therefore made much of in the monastery, though at this time I hated to be a nun, yet I was delighted at the sight of nuns so good—for they were very good in that house, very prudent of the rule and recollected.”

After the turmoil of the past months, Teresa discovered in the routine of the convent, its unvaried order of progression, a sense of satisfaction. The slow, sure movements of the Sisters, summoned at stated intervals by the soft, melancholy bell, the recurrent offices, the simple meals, brought a serenity of spirit such as she had never known. Gradually past perplexities left her, the absent lover ceased to disturb her by eager and protesting letters, small and exquisite gifts—engineered by the persistent parasite—until the messages, growing less frequent, finally ceased. The young man no longer thrust himself against the iron bars of separation, and clamour giving place to silence, Teresa grew conscious of the atmosphere about her and dipped deep into the well of peace.

She was of a nature that, instinctively

desiring appreciation, never flourished in dissension, and her genius flagged under the chill eye of disapproval. All her life she hungered for sympathy, and, save in rare instances, invariably she won it.

The first of the many victories over strange and antipathetic circumstances was in the Augustinian convent. As she tells us, at first she was desolate. Then the unquenchable spirit, eager and questioning, rose up and took the quiet world of the simple Sisters for its own. It was not until much later that she felt any desire to be a nun herself. At sixteen years of age she still, at times, beheld herself as wife and mother surrounded by her children, the centre of a happy household. But for the most part this aspect of life did not greatly hold her. She had suffered, and the pain had touched the quick of her imagination, but gradually the gentle progression of convent existence lapped her spirit, and she who had glowed at the exploits of a knight-errant, who had waited, trembling, for her lover in the shadow of a summer night, turned to the teachings of the Sisters with an eager response that aston-



ished and gratified them. . . . At the recital of a miracle she was uplifted; when Doña Maria Brizeno, mistress of the students, spoke of the rewards and tremors of the spiritual life, she visualised each individual pang and distinct glory.

But though she reacted to the atmosphere, Teresa had no desire to become a part of it; she had, indeed, an invincible distaste from actual incarceration. In her was nothing of the acquiescent; what she gained was won through long and exhausting conflict. That softer strain that made her so exquisite a thing, sent her startling back from the mere thought of perpetual contemplation. And yet the very strength of repulsion attracted, the urge against strengthened the swerve toward self-abnegation.

It was Doña Maria who first set the stage for the long and weary campaign which was to end in spiritual victory:—

“I began gradually to like the good and holy conversation of this nun. How well she used to speak of God! For she was a person of great discretion and sanctity. I listened

to her with delight. I think there never was a time when I was not glad to listen to her. She began by telling me how she came to be a nun through the mere reading of the words of the Gospel. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' She would speak of the reward which our Lord gives to them that forsake all for His sake. This good companionship began to root out the habits which bad companionship had formed and to bring back my thoughts to the desire of eternal things as well as to banish in some measure the great dislike I had to be a nun, which had been very great; and if I saw anyone weep in prayer, or devout in any other way, I envied her very much; for my heart was now so hard that I could not shed a tear, even if I read the Passion through. This was a grief to me."

But though the first of the barriers might be weakened, the fortress itself was still inviolate. Teresa, impressed by Doña Maria's simple sanctity, which found expression in a life of service, was not inclined to join the Augustinians. She was repelled by the rigour of the *régime* favoured by certain Sisters—long and exhaustive fasts, penances, harsh and cruel to tender flesh, roused her opposition. She could

find no satisfactory explanation for the discipline thus practised. It was always the interior reason Teresa sought, mere external observances then, as ever, left her dissatisfied. Nevertheless, consideration of the monastic life like a pendulum, swung before her, now advancing, now retreating, but inevitably there:—

“I remained in the monastery a year and a half and was much the better for it. I began to say many vocal prayers, and to ask all the nuns to pray for me, that God would place me in that state wherein I was to serve Him; but, for all this, I wished not to be a nun, and that God would not be pleased I should be one, though at the same time I was afraid of marriage. At the end of my stay there I had a greater inclination to be a nun, yet not in that house, on account of certain devotional practices which I understood prevailed there and which I thought overstrained. I had also a great friend in another monastery, and this made me resolve, if I was to be a nun, not to be one in any other house than where she was. I looked more to the pleasure of sense and vanity than to the good of my soul. These good thoughts of being a nun came to me from time to time—they left me very soon;

and I could not persuade myself to become one."

A transition period for Teresa was always unsatisfactory. Once her will was set, action was never long delayed. The decision was not yet, however, and it might have been that, back in the Fortress House, the girl would have been married. We hear, indeed, that about this time Don Alonso was approached with negotiations for Teresa's hand; but the negotiations never came to fruition. From this time the girl seems to have set all thoughts of marriage aside. It may be when definite proposals were put forward the sad story of the shadowy Doña Beatriz, who so untimely died, made her afraid. It is, however, certain that a sudden and alarming change in the girl's health ultimately influenced her. . . .

Before she left the convent, Teresa was seized by that mysterious malady which for the rest of her life occurred at unexpected intervals. Accompanied by severe physical pain and intense nervous prostration, a gradual rigidity would attack her limbs, and she would

lie in a condition almost paralytic. The nature of this illness, which completely mystified the rudimentary medicine men of the period, has been long and vainly discussed. The Saint herself always declared it was a species of ague, and this description seems as good as any other to express her state. In our own time, other and more highly sounding names would be given to the recurrent agonies which seize on the more highly organised. In Teresa's case, spirit and flesh acted and reacted on each other simultaneously, with harsh results to the flesh. The fervid imagination which as a child had sent her, eager for martyrdom, to seek the Moors, took heavy toll of the fragile body. In Teresa, the line between the mental image and its physical repercussion was so fine that to visualise suffering was to feel it; while a mental concept of happiness literally irradiated her with joy.

In such cases nature always protects the brain by belabouring the body. Hence, when the mental pressure grows too tense, physical expression rises in revolt. But for these periods of enforced repose, Teresa could not have

weathered her threescore years and seven. It is, perhaps, significant that this first attack, following on her love affair, should have synchronised with her perplexity concerning the discipline practised by the Augustinians; it was as though the agonies of others which she did not comprehend had found expression in her own torment.

She left the convent with a tender regret that held no active longing for return. Deeply moved by the Sisters' grief for her departure, she was conscious, withal, that another phase had ended. Teresa always left her mark on circumstances and people. She passed like a strong, sweet wind through aimless souls and slavish minds, and young and growing things turned to her warmth, instinctive hands. The nuns were joyless when she left them; her going was like the passing of the sun.

It was to a chastened and cruelly altered household that Alonso's best-loved child returned. Her brothers nearly all had flown the nest; the cousins, eager and gallant, no longer lit the place with laughter. A silence that was almost stagnant lay on the old rooms.



Alonso did not add to the gaiety of the sick girl. All day long he sat reading and re-reading the lives of the saints. They gave him a melancholy satisfaction and diverted his thoughts from his dead wife. That homecoming must have stabbed Teresa. We can picture her, small and forlorn, with her faded enthusiasms and lost companions, aching for the touch of her first friends. And yet—the wide brow wrinkles, the dark eyes dim—and yet—how reconcile the aching for warm human things and the increasing hunger for spiritual serenity? The problem pressed too heavily, Teresa again grew seriously ill.

Alonso, who loved her with all the affection his egoism would permit, grew alarmed and packed her off to recuperate with her sister, Maria, by this time the complacent wife of Martin Guzman y Barrientos. This estimable lady lived two days' distance from Avila, in a green and pleasant land. It is dubious, however, if the attractions of Nature, to which Teresa was tremulously responsive, could entirely compensate for the acerbities of Doña Maria, and it is not to be wondered at that

the girl should have broken her journey half-way, putting up at Hortigosa, where lived an aged uncle, the elder brother of her father. This venerable kinsman, so parched with years that time to him seemed ageless, was already arranging his monastic end. He lived to and for himself in the solitude of green woods, mountain slopes, high and valorous torrents, with many volumes of theology. He had already turned his back upon the world and, fixing his fading eyes upon a future heaven, existed only for his soul. He was, however, a man of some learning and had the Cepeda library habit. Here, however, were no books of knight-errantry. His shelves held only flaming indictments of sin, shuddering descriptions of the hell in which a soul separated from its Maker must for ever dwell.

Teresa was not drawn to this type of literature. She had grown up among it, and familiarity did not command appreciation. It was her native graciousness, her irresistible desire to please, no matter at what personal discomfort, that threw her once more into the theological sea. "In giving pleasure to others

I have been most particular, though it might be painful to myself—so much so, that what in others might have been a virtue was in me a great fault, because I was often extremely indiscreet.”

The aged uncle derived refreshment from his tomes and his niece obediently read them to him. In that strange loneliness among the hills, at the side of the old ascetic, the denunciations of St. Gregory and St. Jerome thundered in the girl's ears. Again and again the saints bore in upon her that here and now she must decide between the pleasures of this world and the peace of the next. And as they preached, so did the ancient hidalgo follow. He had lost his wife and family, friends and comrades. But what were these compared to his union with God? “His practice was to read good books in Spanish; and his ordinary conversation was about God and the vanity of the world. By this good conversation of my uncle, I came to understand the truth I had heard in my childhood, that all things are as nothing, the world vanity and passing rapidly away.”

His words—and the saints—profoundly

affected Teresa. Imagination conjured up the terrors of the wrath of the Almighty. "I began to be terrified that if I were then to die, I should go down to hell," and when the soft young heart turned to life for consolation, what did it offer her?

Of marriage she was afraid. She would have none of it. Book learning? By the traditions of her time and caste she had already more than enough for a woman. What was left for a woman of high mettle in that sixteenth century? She could immerse herself in the lives of her relations, journeying, like the poor parasite, from alien hearth to hearth. She could give herself over to works of mercy, which, entailing all the physical drudgery of the convent, was left untouched with spiritual ecstasy.

So much for the flesh. What did its abnegation offer? Discipline of the body, abstinence of the mind, still left unchecked the soul's development. Were there not heights to climb, depths to sound, uncharted seas and pathless wastes to travel? In the quiet and shining cold of that physical loneliness which is a foretaste

of death, a still, small voice summoned Teresa to make choice. . . .

“Though I could not bend my will to be a nun, I saw that the religious state was the best and the softest. And thus, little by little, I resolved to force myself into it.”

From that moment the girl knew interiorly what she had decided. She heard the long reverberation of the convent doors clanging behind her. She beheld the narrow cell which would encompass her daily world. She felt the harsh touch of the garments that would guard her tender body. She saw her lovely little hands unimaginably coarsened by toil. She beheld—and she faltered!—She put the vision from her; hardened her heart to the voice. For Teresa there was no easy road. Not for her the ready acquiescence of vocation. She desired most passionately *not* to be a nun; but she knew she would become one:—

“Oh, my God, in how many ways did His Majesty prepare me for the state wherein it was His will I should serve Him! How, against

my own will He constrained me to do violence to myself! May He be blessed for ever!"

Thus torn by conflicting anguish, Teresa left her uncle and took refuge with her step-sister Maria.



## CHAPTER IV

“Many flowering islands lie in the waters of wide agony”

DOÑA MARIA, immersed in family life, seems to have given her young sister quite a friendly reception. She found it difficult at first to reconcile the fragile creature with wide, serious eyes to the Teresa whose swift gaiety used to perplex her. Though changed, the girl was no easier to understand. There was no relying on Teresa's moods and tenses. From Maria's point of view, she was still a baffling problem. She would lie for hours, racked with pain, without complaint or even a request for a cup of that spring water for which she always had a hunger. Then suddenly sweeping aside her agony, she would sit up and talk with a vividness and insight that Maria of the plodding brain could not follow.

Gradually, however, even this insensitive soul yielded to Teresa's personality. Maria

would spend hours by the sick bed, finding a curious peace of mind from the presence of an invalid who never wept, but most unexpectedly would break into a flashing smile.

And all the while, in the deep night or the high noon, Teresa's interior struggle was unremitting. She would behold herself emaciated with fasting, borne down with loneliness. Keenly attuned to spiritual fear and physical hardship, how could she bear the monotonous severity of the religious life? How could her eager curiosity rest satisfied with the nullifying sameness of a convent day? A day? A long vista of grey years stretched ahead. How many times would she hear the bell that summoned her to prayer? How many nights must she lie down in the sure and certain knowledge that as yesterday was, to-day would follow and the morrow must be.

She argued the case pro and con with conspicuous clarity, she set her probable discomfort and certain pain against the agonies of Christ whom she so passionately wished to serve.

To the men and women of the sixteenth century the agony of the Cross was an actual living thing. Teresa beheld the blood of her Lord, saw the broken limbs, shared to her soul's quick the shuddering agony of Gethsemane's desolation. If her Saviour could bear unnameable torments, could she not endure her lesser pangs?

The reality of her struggle comes home over the long years with an almost blinding force. You hear her voice. She holds you with her cries, as though it were to-day she agonised and faltered. It is difficult immediately to grasp the essentials of that fight. Why should this woman thus distress herself, we ask? If she did not want to be a nun, why need she have become one? Here was no case of that clear call which summoned Joan of Arc to the field and called Catharine of Siena to the Council Chamber. There were other avenues which Teresa could have explored for the use of her fellows and for the glory of God.

It is so tragically simple to grasp the reasons which inspire a man or woman to forsake home, friends, comfort and security for the

study of some obscure disease, to develop a great invention, to trace the progress of a comet. We applaud the spirit that risks death to discover a new country; we admire the devotees of a political or an economic crusade, inspired by faith and worked by fervour. An ideal which for its immediate objective has the alleviation of mortal ills, the reëstablishment of human liberty, the affirmation of justice, stirs the weariest, the most disillusioned of us all—we thrill to the trumpet, we applaud the banner.

It is when the sacrifice is offered to God and not to man we doubt its validity, question its worth.

The daughter of a long fighting line, the descendant of men who, contesting inch by inch the progress of the Moors, had waged a long, unending battle for the Cross, Teresa was well aware of the conditions of conflict. To her mind the struggle between her delicate body and imperious soul was the same in essence as the clash between the men of Avila and the invading hordes. A wild city, this Avila that Teresa so greatly loved,

hung as an eagle's nest upon a craggy spur of the Guadarramas, the outpost of the Christian faith; it was a city's mission to hold back the Moors.

Throughout four centuries the followers of Christ and Mahomet warred for the possession of this pass to the defiles of the Guadarramas, the keystone to the land of promise which lured war-like tribes from the sandy plains. Eternal vigilance was the price of Avila's safety, and the hardy knights of old slept with their swords to hand ready to leap up at a call to arms. Despite her massive walls that still command our awe and admiration, Avila was not secure until, in the eleventh century, Alfonso VI dispossessed the infidel and drove him back into the desert.

So deep a mark have the warriors of Avila left upon their country's history that no prouder boast of unstained valour can be made than descent from those old chiefs who held the foe at bay, and as reward of their high courage were privileged to bear their city's flag in the forefront of the battle.

But even after Alfonso's victory, Avila

was challenged. Again and again the tribesmen, broken but determined, returned to the attack, swooping down in one of those tumultuous forays which swayed the destinies of men and cities day by day. Legend has it that in the twelfth century the city was once again besieged. The valiant knights, conducting a sally, were cut off from their base. The Moors closed in on Avila, left without a man to guard the walls.

It must have seemed an easy triumph for the Moors; at last that proud citadel would fall before them. But they reckoned without the women of the city, mothers and daughters of their hereditary foes. Jimena Blasquez, so the story goes, saved the situation. She summoned the womenfolk, gentle and simple, to the battlements, there to mount guard, and all night long she rode from post to post to see that sentinels kept watch and ward. An ancient record still preserves her words: "My kinswomen, do like me, and God will give us the victory."

And thus in the teeth of death Avila was saved once more.

Jimena was a favourite heroine of Teresa's.



Doubtless she rode with that great heart around the city walls, conjuring up the danger and the ecstasy, the poignancy of triumph, the assuagement of defeat. Familiar also were the dark legends of the sandy plains around the city, where biting winds and cruel hail beat the arid earth from October to June, then to give place to torrid heat; dark legends of Satan's power made manifest in fearsome shapes that rode the whirlwind, screamed to the storm, till exorcism drove them back into oblivion.

These combats raging round her native city, torn with turmoil from its earliest years, were reproduced in the battle raging in Teresa. Her youth, her charm, her love of beauty clamoured against the convent; and her will was on their side. Against them was the slow-growing conviction that if she, like Avila, were to be saved she must fling all tender, clinging memories and desires aside and ride, stark, through the foe—to safety:—

“The devil put before me that I could not endure the trials of the religious life, because of my delicate nature. I defended myself

against him by alleging the trials which Christ endured and that it was not much for me to suffer something for His sake; besides, He would help me to bear it—at least I must have thought so, though I do not remember this last consideration. I endured many temptations during these days. I was subject to fainting fits, attended with fever, for my health was always weak.”

To and fro the combat waged. Teresa, unable to decide herself, called in the aid of honour. She decided to tell her father she desired to become a nun, which—as she says—“was almost like taking the habit, for I was so jealous of my word that I would never, for any consideration, recede from a promise when once my word had been given.” Teresa’s expedient is wonderfully expressive of her character. She could endure the harshest regimentation, the severest discipline, but she must make a voluntary submission to both. Unable to accept any sentence but her own, literally without the harshness to impose it, she contrived to tie herself with a silken cord that only she could loose or bind.

Words were to her winged things that

bore in them the seed of good and ill, exquisite, glittering, potent for high aims or dastardly ends. And by a chain of words, symbols of honour, she bound herself with a courage that is the more appealing because so exquisitely feminine.

She was always feminine, this most human and spiritual of saints. Her greatest sacrifice took on the hue of loveliness, it was so beautifully done.

Her mind fixed, Teresa rose up and, to the surprise of Maria, announced her intention of going home. The perplexed housewife could find as little reason for the girl's departure as for any other of her vagaries, but she did not try persuasion, which seems to show that she had learnt her lesson, and was beginning to realise that she had no more influence on her sister than on the leaping mountain torrent.

Don Alonso, deep in his books, received the news of Teresa's decision with utter incredulity and indignation. He was stunned by the blow; for the first time a member of his family was in a position to withstand the

patriarchal influence. The girl faced him quietly, respectfully, but indomitably, but there was nothing to be done. The poor old man, quite human in the love of his Teresa, was genuinely heart-broken. The joy of his eyes—how bleak, how cruel the Fortress House would be without her. He pleaded, long and ardently; if only she would wait till he was gathered to his fathers he would withdraw his opposition, surely her father's need came first?

You can see his outstretched, almost fumbling, hands plucking at her skirts. Had it come to this, that the lord of Doña Beatriz, arbiter of his children's fate, should be withstood by his youngest and, alas! his best-loved daughter?

But Teresa was immovable. The clash of opposition steeled her will. All those things that lay within the scope of fatherly authority she gave obedience to, but who should say that Don Alonso had mastery over her soul? Teresa had all the gifts of debate, her arguments were inevitably rooted in first principles. Also perhaps she perceived the doctrine, centuries later to be promulgated, the right of man

and woman to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the teeth of parental opposition.

The dependence of childhood over, adolescence claimed these rights. Driven by the force of her decision, Teresa left her home on the Eve of All Souls for the Carmelite Convent of the Encarnacion, and Don Alonso was left alone.

She did not take the thorny road alone, however. Teresa, the born leader, was accompanied by a faithful acolyte. She always had a marvellous influence with men—young, old or middle-aged, they all surrendered to her personality—and just as she had persuaded her beloved Rodrigo years before to seek martyrdom and the Moors, so she induced Antonio, her younger brother, to join her pilgrimage. She lit the boy with the same flame that blazed in herself. He burned to do as the “niña” did, and agreed to seek admittance to the Dominic Monastery of St. Tomas after leaving her at the gates of the Encarnacion.

She must have found comfort in the thought that, though apart, she and Antonio had en-

tered the same world, where, far from childhood's happiness, wrapt in the austerity of an external bleakness, they might know each what the other was enduring.

Teresa had a passionate hunger of humanity which was with her to the end.



## CHAPTER V

“God gave her might and mirth”

TERESA went to her new life resolved, but not enthusiastic. She had no compensating joy; no sudden ecstasy lifted her heart, raised her soul. It was no staff of comfort that she leant on, but a piercing sword.

The Saint herself insists that she was led by “servile fear” to take the veil. That, however, was her opinion in middle age when humility was second nature. Fear never marches slow and steady straight on the foe, but scurries with many a backward look and furtive leap. No woman in the tremors of servility could have left the Fortress House with such serenity the while her heart was torn:—

“The pain I felt when I left my father’s house was so great that I do not believe the pain of dying will be greater—for it

seemed to me as if every bone in my body were wrenched asunder; for as I had no love of God to destroy my love of father and of kindred, this latter love came upon me with a violence so great that if our Lord had not been my Keeper, my own resolution to go on would have failed me. But He gave me courage to fight against myself so that I executed my purpose."

The reasons for Teresa's choice of the Encarnacion are interesting. She had never got over the shock of the discipline practised by the Augustinians; moreover, her dearest friend Juana Suarez was a sister in the convent. If—she must have argued—if Juana can find content, surely I can find it also. Perhaps she imaged something of the quiet intimacy of home—a home sheltered and protected by the sense of God's approval. She hurried to the convent, embraced her brother and, like a tired child, passed through the gates.

The nuns sent for her father; he arrived, poor man, in time to see her take the habit. And thus, on the crest of a wave of high resolve, she entered on a novitiate which, as

she was to find, was the beginning rather than the end of her spiritual adventures.

She must have taken her vows with the tingling joy that always accompanied a new experience. She was filled with a serene satisfaction alien to all knowledge of herself:—

“When I took the habit, our Lord at once made me understand how He helps those who do violence to themselves in order to serve Him. No one observed this violence in me; they saw nothing but the greatest good will. At that moment because I was entering on that state I was filled with a joy so great, that it has never failed me to this day; and God converted the acidity of my soul into the greatest tenderness. Everything in religion was a delight unto me; and it is true that now and then I used to sweep the house during those hours of the day which I had formerly spent on my amusements and my dress; and calling to mind that I was delivered from such follies I was filled with a new joy that surprised me, nor could I understand whence it came.”

But it was not alone the content which comes after decision that Teresa enjoyed. With that swift sympathy that makes no

distinction of persons, she was the handmaiden of all the sorrows, physical and mental, that assailed the Sisters. Did a nun fall sick, Teresa's healing touch and ministering feet made haste to comfort:—

“There was then in the house a nun labouring under a most grievous and painful disorder, for there were open ulcers in her body, caused by certain obstructions, through which her food was rejected. Of this sickness she soon died. All the Sisters, I saw, were afraid of her malady. I envied her patience very much; I prayed to God that he would give me a like patience; and then whatever sickness it might be His pleasure to send, I do not think I was afraid of any, for I was resolved on gaining eternal good, and determined to gain it by any and by every means.”

She threw herself into ministration with a joy that never shrank from the most laborious household task, and while she worked her high clear voice, small but sweet and true, carolled its praises to the Lord.

And then, from the heights of attainment, Teresa suddenly fell into the depths of doubt filled with that divine discontent without

which life grows stagnant. She became suddenly conscious of her environment. It was not apparent hardship that discouraged. The coarse food, the long devotional hours stimulated her. She found no difficulty in practising hard living. It was muddled thinking that perturbed her. Why could she find no content in the practice of her devotions? Had she made a mistake in selecting the Encarnacion?

“In the year of my novitiate, I suffered much uneasiness about things in themselves of no importance; but I was found fault with very often when I was blameless. I bore it painfully and with imperfection. However, I went through it all, because of the joy I had in being a nun. When they saw me seeking to be alone, and even weeping over my sins, at times they thought I was discontented and said so.”

Doubtless the Sisters resented Tèresa's tacit repudiation of their gossip. She must sometimes have longed for the frugality of conversation which characterised St. Maria del Gracia.

The Convent of the Encarnacion was north of the city walls and stood in the midst of a

wild and stony waste, with here and there a clump of coarse, sweet-smelling shrubs. A tumble-down place originally converted from farm cottages, with a leaky chapel roof through which the rain and snow fell on the shoulders of the worshippers, during winter, while the fierce heat blistered them in summer. It was this sort of place one would have expected Teresa to have chosen. With that enthusiasm that nothing damped, she felt the very poverty of the surroundings would evoke a simplicity of soul.

There was, however, another side. The convent was close to what had been a Jewish Synagogue, which on the day of the Jew's expulsion from Spain in the fifteenth century had witnessed strange and terrible scenes, heart-rending lamentations from the living parted from their dead. Legend had it that those cries still rose upon the air each anniversary, and as usual Teresa absorbed the legend, and found in it a spur to a keener warfare against the claims of the flesh. These claims were more readily admitted by the Sisters. Though very poor, the community included daughters of the oldest and most noble families of Spain, who, laughing



at leaky roofs and tattered habits, made existence tolerable and gay by light trivial talk on secular topics. We may be sure Teresa's gravity was continuously discussed. It was an easy, happy-go-lucky existence on which Teresa suddenly opened her eyes to find herself in the midst of a hundred women of all ages, eager to lap up petty scandals, trivial slanders. This spirit, as it seemed to her, coloured even conventual devotions. It is characteristic, however, that she should blame herself rather than the Sisters:—

“I delighted in being thought well of by others, and was very exact in everything I had to do. All this I thought was a virtue, though it will not serve as any excuse for me, because I knew what it was to procure my own satisfaction in everything, and so ignorance does not blot out the blame. There may be some excuse in the fact that the monastery was not founded in great perfection. I, wicked as I was, followed after that which I saw was wrong, and neglected that which was good.”

Her depression seems to have continued until, with sudden resolution and happiness,

she became a professed nun just on twenty years of age. There could be no turning back. Another landmark had been passed. Now she was of the cloister, her perception would be finer and more tolerant. She dismissed her former apprehensions as a temptation of the devil.

But it was never any use for Teresa to try to believe that one and one do not make two, and in spite of prayers and privations the fear that in going to the Encarnacion she had missed her way to complete union with God gained ground. The struggle once again began—where did salvation lie? Her confessions could not solve the problem.

✓ As always, mental disturbance created physical distress. The year after her profession Teresa fell grievously ill. Her symptoms were aggravated. The fainting fits from which she had previously suffered grew more frequent and her heart became seriously affected. Don Alonso, distracted at the news, came post haste, and insisted that his daughter should go home with him. As the Encarnacion was not of the en-

closed order, no objection could be raised to Teresa's temporary absence. So in the autumn of 1535, accompanied by her devoted Juana Suarez, she returned to Avila.

Like a recurring rhythm, the Fortress House punctuated Teresa's life. Each time she went back to her old home she must have been conscious of an increasing remoteness from her childhood. But even so, renewed association with the things of early memories brought comfort. Under the carved roof with the gnome-like faces her soul found ease; her body lapsed into long periods of unconsciousness. Don Alonso, finally raised from selfish apathy, fought for his daughter's life. Doctors from the neighbouring district reinforced the practitioners of Avila, one and all prescribing useless remedies at preposterous fees. In desperation, Don Alonso fled from the medicine men to a "healing woman." This individual practised her craft at Becedas, a little village some leagues distant, to the infinite suffering of her unhappy patients.

The "curandera," as she was called, was

a great institution in the Middle Ages, combining strange and terrible potions—"eye of newt and toe of frog" with physical exercises that cracked the joints and wrung the muscles. That Teresa survived this awful treatment shows her tenacity of life; a less virile woman must have died. The arch-priestess of these enormities—how the sufferers endured their cures remains a marvel—did not open her season till the month of April in each year, thus welcoming the jocund Spring. Pending her machinations, Teresa went again to her sister at Castellanos. Maria and Martin Guzman y Barrientos lived in a house ancient even in those days. The thickness of the walls, hundreds of years old, shut each chamber into silence, the window, little more than a slit, admitting a faint beam of light which fell fantastic on the dark floor.

Teresa, at her own request, was assigned a small room furnished with a stark simplicity that made the Fortress House seem sumptuous. Caged away from the sunshine and from the bustle of family life, the girl lay in a heavy twilight, stirred now and again by a sudden breeze

from the mountains, the distant noises of the farm.

Always eager to discuss ideas, to share her sudden and delicious fancies, Teresa's illness was too serious to allow companionship. Now and again Maria would glance round the door, Don Alonso peeping in disconsolate, but for the most part the girl lay in solitude with only religious books for solace. But she was of too adventurous a spirit to accept such complete isolation. Debarred from exercise of mind and body, she explored those faculties which in most of us lie latent all our days. She practised the subjugation of her will, the abnegation of her consciousness. Her body clogged, her brain fallow, she sent her soul in search. Teresa was not by temperament a visionary; she had no natural aptitude for abnegation; but just as she elected the life of a nun, so she elected the way of the mystic and without expert knowledge or intensive practice, subdued herself and her imperfect flesh until her sense of individuality vanished, and, surmounting the barriers of physical heaviness, she found herself filled with the swift and piercing

joy of a complete if momentary reconciliation between the soul and its source—between the emanation of God and God Himself.

The] term “mystic” to-day is regarded very often as a kind of challenge to the intellect. It is, indeed, preëminently employed as a reproach. The “visions” of a poet, a painter, the unearthly radiance of great verse, the austere beauty of great music, are accepted manifestations. It is only when the “vision” takes the form of interior ecstasy rather than external demonstration that it is disbelieved. And yet the body of evidence as to the truth of such “visions” is irrefragable.

In Teresa’s case, she is her own most remorseless critic and analyst. She follows the various stages of her mystical experiences with a clarity that never evades an issue or discards an argument:—

“How tnis which we call union is effected, and what it is, I cannot tell. Mystical theology explains it, and I do not know the terms of that science; nor can I understand what the mind is, nor how it differs from the soul or the spirit either; all three seem to me but one;



though I do know that soul sometimes leaps forth out of itself, like a fire that is burning, and is become a flame; and occasionally this fire increases violently—the flame ascends high above the fire; but it is not therefore a different thing; it is still the same flame of the same fire. . . .”

But Teresa the Mystic did not startle drowsing theologians till years later. It was but the first flutterings of the leaping flame that came to her in Castellanos. . . .

Spring arrived all too soon for our poor invalid, who, however, resigned herself without complaint, and was carried to Becedas, there to undergo her “cure.” During the ordeal Teresa underwent the tortures of the rack; but with that compensation that life always brought her, she had a startling psychological experience:—

“I remained three months in that place, in the most grievous sufferings; for the treatment was too severe for my constitution. In two months—so strong were the medicines—my life was nearly worn out, and the severity of the pain in my heart, for the cure of which I was there, was much more keen; it seemed to me now and then as if it had been seized by

sharp teeth. So great was the torment, that it was feared it might end in madness. There was a great loss of strength, for I could eat nothing whatever, only drink. I had a great loathing for food, and a fever that never left me. I was so reduced, for they had given me purgatives daily for nearly a month, and so parched up, that my sinews began to shrink. The pains I had were unendurable, and I was overwhelmed in a most deep sadness, so that I had no rest either night or day."

In spite of this diabolical treatment, Teresa found time and strength to disentangle a situation from which a woman with twice her age and experience might have fled. At Becedas she sought a confessor—"a priest of good birth and understanding, with some learning, but not much." That, it may be mentioned, was very frequently the case with Teresa's spiritual guides. Few of them had learning, let alone intellect, equal to her own. She never readily believed in their deficiencies. Her liking for all sorts and conditions of people, her eager enthusiasm for them, deflected her judgment. She was always ready to think others more able than herself; it was only on reflection—the

outcome of interior sifting—that she realised their lack of understanding:—

“I was always fond of learned men, although confessors indifferently learned did my soul much harm; for I did not always find confessors whose learning was as good as I could wish it was. I know by experience that it is better, if the confessors are good men and of holy lives, that they should have no learning at all, than a little; for such confessors never trust themselves without consulting those who are learned—nor would I trust them myself; and a really learned confessor never deceived me.”

This particular confessor certainly did his best to deceive his penitent, in common with some of the others, “That which was a venial sin, they told me was no sin at all; of that which was most grievously mortal, they said it was venial.”

We can see the delicate, high-bred face with its slight look of courteous bewilderment at this amazing discrimination; but bewilderment was to give way to acute distress. The priest, irresistibly attracted by her charm, formed an attachment for Teresa “which

might have been of greater purity, as there were occasions wherein we might have most grievously offended but for the near presence of God."

She was neither appalled nor frightened—there was nothing of the prude in her—but frankly and kindly told him that she was "quite determined on no account to do anything whereby God might be seriously offended." Young, innocent—by no means ignorant—the girl's sweetness and resolution made him ashamed. The unhappy man clung to her skirts, imploring her to help him. "For nearly seven years he had been in a most perilous condition, because of his affection for and conversation with a woman of that place; and yet he used to say Mass; the matter was so public, that his honour and good name were lost, and no one ventured to speak to him about it." Teresa was not in the least shocked by the intrigue—that is to say, she had no mind to leave him unbefriended. She argued the case from the material as from the spiritual point of view, but though he admitted his guilt, he could not persuade himself to end it. Teresa, with her

usual practicality, made further inquiries and learnt that "the miserable woman had had recourse to enchantments, by giving him a little image made of copper, which she had begged him to wear for love of her around his neck; and this no one had influence enough to persuade him to throw away."

It is not surprising to learn that Teresa succeeded where the rest had failed; she was given the image, which she promptly threw into the river. It was then that, like a man roused from a deep sleep, "he began to consider all that he had done in these years; and then, amazed at himself, lamenting his ruinous state, that woman came to be hateful in his eyes."

In other words, he hoped—and perhaps a little feared—that the woman once discarded, Teresa might be more yielding. The priest was not the only one who mistook her ready warmth of kindness for pliability of character; he was to realise that on occasions she could be implacable as steel. Faced by her sweet aloofness, the unfortunate man seems to have gone to pieces. He became melancholy, and a year later died "most piously."

Teresa, in a delicious aside, suggests that she was not taken in over the image:—"As for this matter of enchantments, I do not believe it to be altogether true; but I relate what I saw, by way of warning to men to be on their guard against women who will do things of this kind."

Meanwhile the Saint's "cure" continued with such unremitting ferocity that her illness took an alarming turn. It was feared she was *in extremis*.



## CHAPTER VI

“ . . . Pain whose body shone like fire ”

DON ALONSO awoke too late to the knowledge that the *curandera* was far more fatal than the disease; he left Becedas hurriedly for Avila, where Teresa arrived all but dead. The local medicine men, again called in, changed the name of the disease, and the patient was declared to be suffering from consumption. But a fresh nomenclature does not help an old complaint, and Teresa gradually drifted into an unconsciousness that verged on coma. At rare intervals, when she came up to the surface, she refreshed herself with the “Morals” of St. Gregory which, however, did not stimulate her to recovery.

Teresa does not speak much of this particular period, which lasted for three months, ending in one of those inevitable crises that recur

throughout her life. Early in August, on the Feast of Our Lady, she asked to make her confession. Don Alonso, fearing that the thought of death which had prompted the request might work its own fulfilment, very wisely refused. Teresa, terribly upset, said nothing with her tongue, but her limbs spoke for her. She was seized with violent convulsions, followed by such paroxysms of pain that she fell into a trance-like state which lasted for four days. This, said the wiseacres, is the end of earthly things for poor Teresa. "Look," cried the busy-bodies clustering round her bed. "She is dead," said the Sisters from the Encarnacion, and fell some to praying, others hurrying for a priest, while sacramental candles were lit at her young head. So sure were they that Teresa was gone that her grave was dug ready in the convent, and Carmelite friars chanted the funeral dirge. Extreme unction was administered, and when she, who at such transcendental moments always seemed absorbed in ecstasy, remained unmoved, there appeared no reason for supposing life to lie within her.

How then did she escape?

It was then that Don Alonso asserted his parental right, which for once was in complete accord with the wishes of his child. "This, my daughter," he insisted, "is not yet dead," and suddenly grown imperative, almost majestic, he stood on guard to keep her from the tomb.

All her life Teresa suffered extremes of agony—as of joy. But always the urge of her necessity evoked a champion. She had had a long, trying illness which, yielding neither to unremitting and most dreadful remedies nor the soft affection of her friends, was most wearing to the onlookers. Think then of the magic of that personality which gripped the interest even in spasms of demoralising pain! In physical torture, as in spiritual torment, Teresa was always magnetic. . . .

Alonso had his reward; when at last his daughter, coming back to consciousness, opened her eyes—full of wax from the dripping death candles—she turned toward him with a smile! Her trance over, she immediately grew practical. It was essential then and there to make confession, which accomplished, she re-

lapsed into tears and shakings, unable to move hand or foot:—

“After those four days, during which I was insensible, so great was my distress, that our Lord alone knoweth the intolerable sufferings I endured. My tongue was bitten to pieces; there was a choking in my throat because I had taken nothing, and because of my weakness, so that I could not swallow even a drop of water; all my joints seemed to be out of joint, and the disorder of my head was extreme. I was bent together like a coil of ropes—for to this was I brought by the torture of those days—unable to move either arm or foot, or hand, or head, any more than if I had been dead, unless others moved me—I could raise, I think, one finger of my right hand. As to touching me, that was impossible, for I was so bruised that I could not endure it. They used to move me in a sheet, one holding one end and one the other.”

A fresh relay of medicine men was proposed; but Teresa had made up her mind on that score. Death was infinitely preferable to treatment, and by now she had made up her mind that she was going to die. She must have had a sense of

terrible frustration. Was her long and anguished conflict to end so early with so little done? She reviewed the situation and decided to go back to the convent. There, if she found no rest for her body, there might be balm for her soul. She faced family opposition calmly, and finally won her way. She was taken to the Encarnacion on Palm Sunday, where "they received one whom they had waited for as dead; but her body was worse than dead. . . . It is impossible to describe my extreme weakness, for I was nothing but bones."

The kindly Sisters welcomed her with concern; not one of them, however, seemed to have suspected that a genius was amongst them. Women, for the most part, have little perception of greatness where their own sex is concerned.

For eight months Teresa remained a physical wreck; gradually, however, the will to live grew stronger. She was no longer content with the convent infirmary, she ached for solitude. She wanted to send her soul into the infinite, to capture once again the sense of union with her

Lord. So soon as she could "praising God crawl about on her hands and knees," she left the infirmary and went back to the cell where, for the next three years, still partly paralysed, she had to stay. During that period she studied long and earnestly a book which the old recluse, her uncle, had given her, "The Third Alphabet" of Fray Francesco de Osuna, a practical mystic who wrote early in the sixteenth century. Teresa was not by nature contemplative, but she tells us that "The Third Alphabet"\* taught her to follow "a way of prayer" which led to the vision of God by annihilation of self:—

"If often happens, when I am not even thinking of the things of God, but engaged in other matters, and when prayer seems to be beyond my power whatever efforts I might make, because of the great aridity I am in, bodily pains controlling thereto, that this recollection or elevation of spirit comes upon me so suddenly that I cannot withstand it, and the fruits and blessings it brings with it are in a moment mine: and this, without my

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\**Tercer Abecedaria.*



having had a vision, or heard anything, or knowing where I am. . . .”

Ecstasy is a term freely applied to temperamental genius; even the meanest of God's creatures must at moments have lost the consciousness of self wrapped in a blinding sense of beauty. If, however, we are to form a just estimate of Teresa's powers, mystical and practical, it is necessary to decide how far her statements are to be relied on. Did she actually experience this “elevation of spirit” or delude herself into the belief that she had done so? Can she be regarded as a dispassionate analyst of her experiences, or is she giving vent to the hysterical outpourings of an unbalanced judgment? The evidence for and against Teresa's spiritual experiences has already been long and arduously examined. It was sifted by the Inquisition with a determined ferocity, based on a rooted suspicion of any manifestation, material or mystic, that suggested a new angle, an untried thought.

Long and earnestly did the Holy Fathers labour to label Teresa an impostor; only with

the deepest reluctance did they admit her testimony to be valid and admitted that she had received direct communications from our Lord. The body of evidence so meticulously judged lies in her writings—her “Life,” “Letters,” “The Interior Castle,” “The Way of Perfection.” The first thing that leaps to the understanding as you read is the luminous simplicity of her phrasing which so wondrously expresses the development of her soul. Her imagery, intimate and sublime, always retains its clarity. ✓ Step by step she describes the merging of her will into the will of God: “Spirit is the higher part of the will, pure and raised up above all the things of earth with nothing remaining in it that would swerve from the will of God, occupied in God in such a way as to leave no trace of any love of self.”

This is not the language of one unable to dissociate phenomena from personality, without the patience or capacity to follow a complicated mental process and reduce it to the simplest term. Teresa has not that preoccupation with self which is the hall-mark of hysteria.

Listen to what she says of a soul in travail to attain God:—

“It is beyond the power of words to express or describe the manner in which God draws close to the soul, and the exceeding pain of it which deprives her of consciousness; yet so sweet is this pain that no delight of life can give more content. The soul would willingly be dying for ever of such a hurt. So dazed was I with this pain and glory together, that I could not understand how it could be.”

Can anyone read this and deny the writer's deep sincerity? A sincerity that remains untarnished throughout her autobiography and the relations of her spiritual state. Her statements never vary. She does not claim supernatural powers, nor even that she is unduly favoured; she gives a quiet, a reasoned account of what she interiorly experienced, and judged by objective standards—the repute of her life, her honour and integrity, her sheer inability to lie—to all impartial minds, her words must carry conviction. To those who have fallen under the fascination of her flashing intellect,

unquenchable courage and spiritual charm there can be no question. Truth, as she knew it, lies mirrored in Teresa.

If further proof were needed of the Saint's sanity and balance, it surely lies in the fact of her direct translation of these mystic revelations into practical reforms. It was not enough to experience "rapture" ("rapture and trance," she says, "in my opinion are all one, only I am in the habit of using the word trance instead of rapture because that particular word frightens people"), she must show thanksgiving by works, not only of spiritual significance, but also of constructive value. The most sincere as the most practical of mystics, her genius was to flower only after long preparation and sore persecution. . . .

At the moment we return to the Encarnacion, where Teresa is enduring three years of slow recovery. As always, even in the direst distress, she was the social centre of her immediate group. The Sisters crowded to her cell with the same instinct for personality that had influenced the family in the Fortress House. A gossiping lot, these Sisters, they brought tit-bits

of humour and of malice for the sick girl's delectation. But Teresa was of finer caste. The Cepeda tradition eliminated backbiting—even the parasite during occasional absences had been free from attack—and Castilian courtesy had no tolerance for scandal. The convent, which included many devout souls, also numbered women who had taken the habit for lack of worldly ties or strong affections. These last, through practice, were skilled raconteurs, able to turn a plain fact into embroidered tapestry upon the instant. Teresa had no use for the tambour frame and shut down definitely on slander, however delicately disguised. This had its effect upon the Sisters, but even her rule of abstinence did not keep them from her cell:—

“It came to be understood that where I was, absent persons were safe; so gradually they were also safe with my friends and kinsmen and those whom I instructed.”

She must have wearied so often of the unreasoning monotony, waiting with eagerness for night to fall that she might seek mystic union.

And then one morning from the depths of physical weakness she arose determined to get better. Her friends attended Teresa on many death-beds only to greet her amazing resurrections:—"When I saw how helpless I was through paralysis, being still so young, and how the physicians of this world had dealt with me, I determined to ask those of heaven to heal me." The particular physician she selected was St. Joseph. A child in essence, for all her wisdom, she turned to him instinctively:—

"To other saints our Lord seems to have given grace to succour men in some special necessity; but this glorious Saint I know by experience to help us in all; and our Lord would have us understand that, as He was Himself subject to him upon earth—for St. Joseph having the title of father and being His guardian could command Him—so now in Heaven He performs all his petitions."

Teresa always enforced interior decision by external demonstration. She kept the Saint's feast with a pomp and circumstance that later she repented for fear it savoured of aggrandise-



ment. Her impulses, like meadowsweet, were fragrantly spontaneous. St. Joseph, we feel sure, appreciated all her offerings. At any rate, she found herself as by a miracle restored to health. "St. Joseph acted like himself in enabling me to rise and walk about, rid of the paralysis."

Insatiably grateful, Teresa never forgot the Saint in all her prayers and intercessions. She grew to have a mystic knowledge of him, and later dedicated her convents to his name. She had a beautiful and simple friendship for St. Joseph, and resented the slights and the indignities he received from the unthinking. Her enthusiasm bridged time and space; for Teresa it was always "now," though the immediate moment might immeasurably differ from its predecessor. To her St. Joseph in the spirit was equally living in the flesh:—

"It is now some years since I have always on his feast asked him for something, and I always have it. . . . I know not how any man can think of the Queen of the Angels, during the time that she suffered so much with the Infant Jesus, without giving thanks to St.

Joseph for the services he rendered them then. He who cannot find any one to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious Saint for his master, and he will not wander out of the way."

It was Teresa's devotion, her capacity for quickening interest in the beliefs she held, as in the people she befriended, that rescued St. Joseph from the twilight of obscurity that had befallen him. He was thrust into the light of day, and under the sunshine of Teresa's smile refound his votaries.

Thus this amazing woman shook off paralysis and regained something of her old health and spirits. But she was never physically strong, and though of amazing vitality, her heart remained affected; she suffered from sickness every morning—"so that I could not swallow any food till past midday." When she took the sacrament she had to induce this sickness overnight "with a feather or by other means." But so buoyant was her temperament that as the warm blood stirred in her body she stretched out her hands to the future with delight. A narrow cell could not confine her vision;

the ecstasies of mysticism could not bind her will.

She was young, eager; life at the Encarnacion still had much to offer; and what it offered Teresa took.

## CHAPTER VII

“’Tis a delicate matter to play with souls”

TERESA's whole life was a continuous and engrossing struggle. From the time, as a girl of eighteen, she decided, against her will, to be a nun, until some thirty years later, she was divided between desire for union with God and interest in and affection for her friends, family, and the Sisters of the convent. She was a woman of such intensive feeling that she could not spread enthusiasm over a large surface; that which moved her most deeply, which stirred her to the quick, claimed for the time her allegiance, all the wealth of her devotion, the driving force of her will, the concentrated energy of her brilliant brain.

She had to discover many things before she won through to spiritual serenity, once and for all to give mind, body and spirit to the service of her Lord, other loyalties, exterior

attachments, falling into a dim perspective; not that, even so, she became impersonal. At sixty-seven Teresa knew the name, the attributes, desires and failings of all her daughters, and gave to each according to their need. But she was no longer torn between two attractions; her soul had found its home and was at ease.

She was well over forty when at last she attained peace. The intervening period was one of tempest: now she was lifted on the wings of mystic exaltation, now moving in genial pleasantries, only to be submerged in dank depression.

At two and twenty, in the first flush of improved health, fired with gratitude to St. Joseph, she spent long hours in prayer. But gradually her young eyes turned from things spiritual and she felt an increasing joy in conversation and companionship. She did not find these in any great degree among the Sisters. There were, however, other sources of social recreation. In the year 1537, before the Council of Trent had laid down its decrees as to the "enclosure" of nuns, the Convent of the En-

carnacion was run on lines which to-day would be impossible. The "parlours" were open to all comers. The friends and relatives of the Sisters would look in for a gossip; fashionable ladies would unburden their souls and talk over their lovers. Nor was this pleasant converse confined to the feminine sex: brothers, cousins, old-time and new-time acquaintances gathered at the Encarnacion. Everyone knew everyone in Avila. The Sisters were inter-related with half the families of the city, which still preserved the close-knit ties that dated from the Moorish era, when on an instant the alarm bell might summon men and women to defend their homes.

Teresa soon found herself surrounded by eager friends and admirers. Illness had but increased her beauty; the dark eyes set in the cameo of her pale face, glowed deeper, the lovely little hands fluttered like doves against the sombre dress. The flame of her miraculous cure gave added attraction, her tongue had never been more witty; her sallies, impertinent and profound, filled the "parlours" daily. Many of the young gallants were old admirers



of our heroine; some of them had sighed in vain in the dim rooms of the Fortress House; others were of shorter acquaintance, but one and all rejoiced in her return to life, sunning themselves in her presence. The slight figure with the flashing smile, the ethereal face touched now and then to weariness, drew large and larger crowds, all of them responsive to her charm, regretful of the habit—which at the same time added piquancy to her allure. The conditions for Teresa were very happy; she could dismiss her gossips or encourage them as she so wished. Gradually her genius for friendship was reasserted; she formed certain attachments, and the chosen few were given long hours at the lattice screen, discussing many things. Ardent, responsive, she expanded in innocent human pleasure:—

“When I began to indulge in these conversations, I did not think, seeing they were customary, that my soul would be injured and dissipated by them. I thought that as receiving visits was so common in many monasteries, no more harm would befall me thereby than befell others whom I knew to be good.”

But eventually Teresa analysed her feelings and her thoughts so closely that deception was impossible. She realised she could not enjoy her friends and at the same time experience the mystic exaltation which pierced her with so pure a joy. The discovery sent her trembling to her knees, but, alas! her words flew up, her thoughts remained with those attachments which were so closely knit about her heart:—

“So then, going from pastime to pastime, from vanity to vanity, from one occasion of sin to another, I began to expose myself exceedingly to the very greatest dangers. My soul was so distracted by these many vanities, that I was ashamed to draw near unto God in any act of such special friendship as that of prayer.”

Impossible for Teresa to imagine existence of the soul, as of the body, without friendship. There is in her attitude to God a most beautiful and affectionate fearlessness. He was her friend, and as such she must not affront Him.

This, however, did not help her. She was still in the clutches of divided love, unable on the one hand to resign human attachment, fear-

ful on the other of offence against the divine; she compromised, and abandoning her solitary devotions, joined ceremoniously in congregational worship:—

“It was the most fearful delusion into which Satan could plunge me—to give up prayer under the pretence of humility. I thought it would be better for me, seeing that in my wickedness I was one of the most wicked, to live like the multitude—to say the prayers which it was bound to say, and that vocally; not to practise mental prayer nor commune with God so much.”

But though she practised a devotional attitude which to the unobservant Sisters looked like the real thing, Teresa never allowed herself to play the hypocrite. She knew she could not pray interiorly, unless and until she gave herself wholly to prayer. She tells us naïvely why the nuns did not blame her:—

“They said that I, who was so young and exposed to so many occasions of sin, withdrew myself so often into solitude for prayer; read much; spoke of God; that I liked to have His image painted in many places, to have an ora-

tory of my own and furnish it with objects of devotion, that I spoke ill of no one, and other things of the same kind in me which have the appearance of virtue."

Not that it seems possible that Teresa in any case could have excited the condemnation of the Sisters. She does not specify the particular attachments she made; we may conclude, however, that at least one young man was a friend. And yet she never derogated in the slightest either from established rule as a woman of gentle breeding, or as a nun. She was allowed—by reason of her reputation—the liberty accorded to the most aged inmate of the Encarnacion. It was probably an occasion of pride that the youngest and loveliest of the Sisters could in safety be permitted such freedom:—

"As for taking any liberty for myself, or doing anything without leave—such as conversing through the door, or in secret, or by night—I do not think I could have brought myself to speak with anybody in the monastery in that way, and I never did it, for our Lord held me back."

And yet the sweet converse still continued. Her vitality drew everyone within her orbit. At times she started back, frightened at the increasing pull of popularity. In such moments her distress visualised Divine resentment. One particular friend was the cause of the most poignant suffering:—

“Christ stood before me, stern and grave, giving me to understand what in my conduct was offensive to Him. I saw Him with the eyes of the soul more distinctly than I could have seen Him with the eyes of the body. The vision made so deep an impression upon me, that though it is more than twenty-six years ago, I seem to see Him present even now.”

Greatly astonished and perturbed, she decided it would be better not to see the friend any more. But interiorly her will was not yet set, and the individual in question still engaged her society, thus precipitating a really unpleasant demonstration:—

Another time when I was with that person” (somehow one seems to scent the parasite once more returning) “we saw, both of

us, and others who were present also saw, something like a great toad crawling toward us, more rapidly than such a creature is in the habit of crawling."

Teresa admits that she cannot understand:—

"how a reptile of that kind could in the middle of the day have come forth from that place; it had never done so before." . . . "But even so, the impression it made on me was such, that I think it must have had a meaning."

Whatever the "inwardness" of the apparition, it did not break the attraction of the parasite. That was left to less supernatural agencies.

It is significant that in describing the "toad" Teresa remains well on debatable territory. She never affirms nor denies; you feel that she would not quarrel with anyone who roundly denies its existence—which, indeed, on her own showing, was metaphorical.

It was an old nun, somewhat acidulous and very prejudiced, who first reprehended our Teresa. Long past her age and never possessing the gift of attraction, she was affronted at the girl's vitality. No perception of Teresa's strug-



gles reached her, all she knew was that the young Sister was too much abroad, and therefore continually "warned" her:—

"Not only did I not listen to her, but I was even offended, thinking she was scandalised without cause—as undoubtedly she was."

It was never the voice of external criticism or complaint that affected Teresa; her decisions always emanated from her own convictions.

The struggle reached an acute stage a little later. She had, however, by then realised that the Encarnacion as it existed promoted rather than repelled temptation. Much as she loved the Sisters, she is unsparing in her condemnation of their system:—

"I think it did me much harm to be in a monastery not enclosed. It is, I believe, the very greatest danger, a monastery of women unenclosed. . . . If parents would take my advice, let them marry their daughters to persons of a much lower degree, rather than place them in monasteries of this kind, unless they be of extremely good inclinations, and God grant that these inclinations may come to good!—or let them keep at home. If they will be wicked at

home, their evil life can be hidden only for a short time; but in monasteries it can be hidden long, and in the end it is our Lord that discovers it."

Teresa's attachments were suspended, not by toadly manifestations or ancient croakings, but by the illness of her father.

Don Alonso had learnt the art of mental prayer from his daughter during her long months of desperate illness. She had formed a fresh and beautiful tie with the old man, teaching him the ecstasies and agonies of mysticism. He was an apt pupil and resigned himself more and more to the contemplative life. Teresa was still his darling, however, and in spite of increasing infirmity and age, he came to see her full of joy at her return to health. By this time Teresa had refrained from mental prayer for a twelve-month. Faced by her father's tender admiration and desire for guidance, she found herself impelled to admit her separation from God. As one reads of her passionate struggles, her ceaseless torments, the whiteness of her soul becomes almost tragically apparent,

so that with her stripes we are so bruised, that we cry out against this long-continued battle. So young, so pure, so innocent a creature, after three hundred years we still protest against her suffering—suffering that no exterior salve could heal. The fight was of her own choosing and she herself against herself was locked in combat.

It was impossible for Teresa to feign devotion that she did not feel, but not wanting to hurt her father, she told him that she did not pray, without telling him why. She allowed him to think it was from bodily weakness she abstained, that the fainting fits which never left her prevented long hours of solitary communion:—

“My father believed me when I gave him that for a reason, as he never told a lie himself; neither should I have done so, considering the relation we were in. He believed all I told him; moreover he was sorry for me; and as he had now risen to great heights of prayer himself, he never remained with me long; for when he had seen me, he went his way, saying that he was wasting his time. As I was wasting it in other vanities, I cared little about this.”

It was one of the minor tragedies of the Saint's life that she always gave—in every sense—far more than she received. Having spent long months in directing Don Alonso to mental prayer, he was unable to spare her a few days to find out what was wrong with her. A mean old man, I think, he showed himself, at this particular moment; there is something callously cold-blooded in hastening to your own prayers, indifferent to the prayers of others.

However, Don Alonso did not long enjoy his self-absorption. He was seized with an illness which he recognised as mortal, and fifteen days later died. There is something almost shudderingly pathetic in his quavering regret that he had not served God as a friar—of the strictest order. Shades of pale Beatriz, denied even the faint stirrings of recollection—the dim ghosts of her buried youth. She had borne him nine children, and he moaned that he was not a monk!

Alonso suffered “a most acute pain of the shoulders which never left him,” which goes to show that Teresa's ague was derived from

the Cepeda rheumatism. The girl used herself body and soul to help the dying man. The attachments were flung to the winds, the parasite utterly forgotten; the miasma of her spirit fled at the need for succour. She wrapped herself in his agonies, treading with him each step of the death road, sharing each separate and particular pain. She could always sink herself, her beauty, her charm, her amazing and supreme vitality, in others' ills. She agonised over her father night and day, reading, praying, soothing, spending herself with royal prodigality to the last:—

“He remained three days without consciousness, but on the day he died, our Lord restored him so completely, that we were astonished; he preserved his understanding to the last; for in the middle of the Creed which he repeated to himself, he died. He lay there like an angel—such he seemed to me, if I may say so, both in soul and disposition; he was very good.”

There we leave him with his daughter's epitaph. Good is a colourless word, remote from storm; and storm and Don Alonso, save

for the one immortal moment when he fought death for Teresa's life, were very separate. Nevertheless his loss was a cruel trial to the girl. Slowly but surely the ties between her and the Fortress House were being torn apart. Of her nine brothers, seven had already gone to the Indies and Antonio, the youngest, had become a monk. Rodrigo, the beloved comrade of her youth, was soon to die in the conquest of Peru; the others were not to return till years later. Maria, the stodgy, and her sister Juana alone were left. The attachments at the convent still remained, but after Don Alonso's death the swing of temperament swept Teresa in the other direction.

Among those who had gathered round the old man's deathbed was a Dominican, Fr. Vincente de Barron. In the turmoil of her misery Teresa turned to him and revealed her soul. Barron seems to have been above the average of the Saint's advisers. But though his learning was far greater—he had been trained in the Inquisition, and was knee-deep in the refinements of theological debate—he was not her equal in perception nor in personality.



She always, and most unknowingly, dominated those with whom she came into contact. Father Vincente could guide her in things official, help her in matters spiritual, but he could not follow the darting flights of her swift mind. He could not understand the delicate modulations of a conscience that judged itself by a far more drastic rule than that laid down by her confessor. Wherein had she offended? What was the fount and origin of her distress?

Teresa's answer was eternally the same. There was that within her which was the judge against whom there could be no appeal. She was certainly a difficult proposition for the Church!

## CHAPTER VIII

"The bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast"

FR. VINCENTE DE BARRON, of lesser personality than his penitent, was able at least to convince Teresa on a debatable and most distressful point. He insisted that no matter what happened, it would be fatal to abstain from prayer, that her soul would never find peace shut off from intercourse with her Maker:—

"He charged me never to omit it; that anyhow it could not do me anything but good. I began to return to it—though I did not cut off the occasion of sin—and never afterwards gave it up."

But prayer, as she realised, was two-edged. If it brought peace, it also brought anguish.

✓ "On one side God was calling me; on the other I was following the world." It was such a small slice of the world that drew her—the lasting and simple delight of that interchange of

ideas which is the mind's refreshment. But to a sensitive nature the least falling off from an ideal is insupportable:—

“It seemed as if I wished to reconcile two contradictions, so much at variance one with another are the life of the spirit and the joys and pleasures and amusements of the senses.”

She had still a long, weary battle to fight through, and sometimes Teresa felt that the weapons provided by the convent for the resistance of evil turned against her:—

“I am exceedingly sorry for these houses” (unenclosed) “because our Lord must of necessity send His special inspirations not merely once, but many times, if the nuns therein are to be saved, seeing that the honours and amusements of the world are allowed among them, and the obligations of their state are so ill-understood. God grant they may not count that to be virtue which is sin, as I did so often. It is very difficult to make people understand this.”

From the distraction of the “parlours” she turned to the refreshment of prayer, when she experienced complete exaltation. God, it seems, prepared great happiness for her:—

“In truth, O my King, Thou didst administer to me the most delicate and painful chastisement it was possible for me to bear; for Thou knewest well what would have given me the most pain. Thou didst chastise my sins with great consolations.”

Nevertheless these “consolations” did not keep her from her acquaintance. From them also she won a cordial welcome. And so the balance swayed to one side and the other. It was in effect a duel of contesting attractions for her possession. Fray Luis de Leon, one of her most famous biographers, puts the position very frankly:—

“As rivals for affection make every effort with greater demonstrations of love and extraordinary service to estrange the wills of those they love from the rest, and incline it to themselves, so did it seem that God exerted Himself to discover Himself more abundantly to her, whilst the World and the Devil entangled and tempted her most. . . . The oratory blotted out what the grating wrote, and at times the grating vanquished and diminished the good fruit produced by prayer.”

So waged her never-ending struggle. Who shall resolve the claims of warring loyalties? Should Turner keep his word and pay his bills, or set imperishable beauty upon canvas? Should Palissy the potter maintain wife and children in the home, or burn it board by board to feed the furnace that shall bring his clay to immortality? Should Teresa keep her allegiance to her friends—or give herself to God? Who can square the circle? Neither genius nor saint can drive expediency and ecstasy abreast.

Teresa crucified her heart and her soul trying to find the answer, until driven by anguish she enlisted the advice of learned men and spiritual advisers. They could not help her. They did not see where her difficulty lay. According to them, so long as she obeyed the convent rule she did no ill in talking to her acquaintance. Once again she tells us: "Sin which seemed to me venial they said was no sin, whilst mortal sin of the gravest kind seemed to them venial."

Her relations with the Sisters at this time also grew a little strained. Teresa's divagations puzzled and a little vexed them. They enjoyed

her popularity in the "parlours," revered her devotion in the oratory; what they could not understand was her alternations between contentment and despondency. Her fits of self-reproach, her anguished sense of sin, antagonised the nuns. If the associations of the Encarnation with the outer world were good enough for them, what was the matter with Teresa? And yet her fastidious loyalty, her generous warmth, her glad performance of the meanest household task, appealed so strongly that they never made open reproaches. It was a silent but difficult opposition that faced her. Nevertheless the attitude of these her Sisters prolonged her battle. Teresa tells us that:—

"the friar or the nun who in very truth begins to follow their vocation, have more to fear from those of their own community than from all the devils combined."

And still she hovered on the border-line of decision. It was not that she feared pain. Teresa could always steel herself to proud endurance. She could have borne unflinchingly to give up her friendships, tear the ligaments of



affection and comradeship from her roots. The difficulty was that while the voice of her soul demanded abnegation, the voice of her confessors insisted that such sacrifice was not essential. And who was Teresa to set herself above the pillars of the Church?

For eighteen years she struggled from doubt to doubt. Eighteen years between the grating and the oratory, equally welcome, it would seem, at both. Her friends hailed her coming; God showed His pleasure by permitting her to taste of the sweetness of "consolations and mercies"; and in between she passed through the hell of strange mistrusts. We can see her going from cell to chapel and chapel to parlour with shining eyes and parted lips, unconscious that her youth was slipping by. Time dealt very gently with Teresa. The pale face grew more ethereal, the features more acute, but the flame that burnt so strongly in her fragile body struck the years from her each time she spoke. She had the qualities of enthusiasm, curiosity and indignation, imperishable guards against flaccidity. Day followed day, weeks mounted into months in a soothing pro-

gression, broken only by the spasms of an interior struggle which gradually began to grow a little faint. Look at her steeped in the placid Encarnacion! With all her gifts, Teresa's future might have been foretold as that of any of the hundred nuns who shared the same existence. But the child who had dragged Rodrigo to seek martyrdom, the girl who had lashed her will to honour and so bound had forced herself to take the habit, could never have achieved a commonplace fulfilment. All her life until the final chapter, when like a warrior in the fullness of strength Teresa marched straight to her destiny, phases of intense physical and emotional activity were followed by periods of passivity wherein body and soul prepared for the next blossoming.

From this exhausting yet fitful search for the bourne of her desires, where she could offer whole-heartedly the treasures of her love, Teresa was released as by the opening of a door. She began to read the "Confessions of Saint Augustine"; apparently the Cepeda libraries did not include this gloomy and most punitive

saint, for she tells us that: "it seems that the Lord ordered it, for I did not try to get the Confessions, nor had I ever before seen them." St. Augustine appealed to her in several ways. In the first place he brought back the memory of those first days at St. Maria del Gracia, the convent of his Order; then step by step there grew up in her mind the image of an affinity between them. She traced resemblance in her struggles and in his; she found relief in remembering he had been a sinner: "When I began to read the Confessions, I seemed to see myself in its pages." This was Teresa's old trick of identifying herself with the character of which she read. Just as she had ridden with the knights of old, suffered the tortures of the martyrs, so now she shared the pangs and terrors of a penitent who had nothing of her leaping sympathy or flaming love:—

"When I came to his conversion, and read how he heard the voice in the garden, it was just as if the Lord had called me, so did it thrill my heart."

Her spirit was already stirring; she moved in the hushed expectancy that comes before a call:—

“A desire to spend more time with His Divine Majesty began to grow within me, and also to withdraw from the occasions of sin; for as soon as I had done so, I turned lovingly to His Majesty at once.”

And then—Teresa’s changes were of unexampled swiftness:—

“It came to pass one day, when I went into the oratory, that I saw a picture which they had put by there and which had been procured for a certain feast in the house. It was a representation of Christ most grievously wounded; the very sight of it so moved me, that I thought my heart was breaking. How ill had I repaid those wounds! I threw myself on the ground beside it, my tears flowing piteously, and implored Him to strengthen me once for all so that I might never offend Him any more.”

From that moment the balance definitely swung away from the convent parlour. The long talks at the grating receded in attraction. She grudged each moment’s absence from her

perfeverid devotions. But even so her final dedication had not yet been made. She still saw no fundamental reason against her attachments, even though they seemed shadowy and faint as the sense of divine union grew more clear. She became more and more detached from the objective universe:—

“Sometimes even when I was reading, a feeling of the presence of God would come over me unexpectedly, so that I could in no wise doubt either that He was within me, or that I was wholly absorbed in Him.”

And yet, however, she was not at home in Zion. She still lacked that freedom and friendliness toward her Lord that later made her so amazing a person. From exaltation she still relapsed into despondency. She found herself questioning the source of her mystic communion. Could it, she asked in fear and trembling, could it be the devil?

“When I began to avoid the occasions of sin . . . His Majesty began to give me very frequently the grace of the prayer of quiet and very often that of union which lasted a considerable time. But as in these days women have

fallen into great delusions through the deceits of Satan, I began to be afraid because the joy and sweetness I felt were so great and very often beyond my power to avoid. On the other hand, I felt it myself a very deep conviction that God was with me. . . . Nevertheless if I became a little distracted, I began to be afraid that it was Satan who suspended my understanding . . . in order to withdraw me from mental prayer. . . . This fear so grew upon me, that it made me seek out diligently for spiritual persons with whom I might treat of my state."

It was about this time that certain Jesuits founded a community in Avila. The society, still in its infancy—Loyola had formed the Company of Jesus twenty years before—had already attracted the most brilliant intellectuals of young Spain, incurring in the process the dislike and suspicion of those fossilised conservatives who resent the emergence of anything or anybody yet untried. The Fathers were very poor and their monastery was tumble-down and wretched, but their reputation for learning was unrivalled. Teresa, with her passion for scholarship, was tremendously attracted; she



felt that amongst them she might at long last find a director with perception and authority. At the same time, with the curious self-mistrust that occasionally took possession of her, she did not think herself "fit to speak to them, or strong enough to obey them." At once desirous and afraid, she did a characteristic thing and referred her difficulty to a second opinion. She called in the aid of a "holy gentleman" known and loved throughout the neighbourhood. Thus she describes Francisco de Salcedo, who remained her faithful and devoted friend and counsellor to the end of his days:—

"A married man; his life is so edifying and virtuous, so given to prayer and so full of charity, that the goodness and perfection of it shines forth in all he does. . . . Many souls have been blessed through him. . . . He is a man of great sense and very gentle with all people; his conversation is never wearisome, but so sweet and gracious . . . that he pleases everybody very much with whom he has any relation."

Behold then the amiable Francisco interviewing Teresa in the parlour. She fluttering with expectation and relief—still a child for

all her forty years—eager to please, fearful of being chidden: he patient, tolerant and very kind. What a sensation for the Sisters that Teresa should send for a layman, however pious, to resolve her soul. He was, she tells us, a very perfect gentle knight Salcedo, and the beginning of her salvation. He discussed at length the problem of her ecstasies, now believing their divine origin, now swayed toward a diabolic explanation. His uncertainty was undoubtedly due to Teresa's passionate indictment of her sins, always with reference to the parlours. So fervent was her remorse, that Don Francisco took a grave view of the situation. Her soul was in peril, an able, godly, authoritative ecclesiastic must be called in. It was always so with poor Teresa. Her spiritual afflictions, like her bodily ills, were diagnosed by innumerable physicians, heavenly and otherwise, but it was only she herself who could name the disease and prescribe the cure.

The able and authoritative priest was accordingly summoned in the person of Fr. Gaspar Daza, who took an instant antagonism to Teresa which effectually choked all possible

understanding. He told her roundly that she must then and there root out all human attachments, not so much because the Lord wished it, as that he, Gaspar, ordered it! Further, he insisted that until this was done he was not even prepared to discuss her visions or her ecstasies. His ministrations did not last long, to the comfort, we feel, of poor Teresa:—

“He ordered the affairs of my soul as if I ought to be perfect at once. . . . The means he would have employed were not those by which my soul could be helped; for though the graces I had received from God were very many, I was still at the very beginning in the matter of virtue and mortification.”

Finally he utterly refused the office of her confessor on the grounds of excessive occupation. One suspects he was not only irritated but afraid of such a penitent. Teresa had a knack of breaking through well-tried arguments and showing the mental chasm underneath. He could not cope with a soul of this particular calibre, and gathering up his robes, he fled away.

What next? asked the unhappy Sister. Don Francisco, shaking his head, went into

conference with Gaspar. He was, one feels, a silly old man for all his goodness, over-weighted as Teresa never was by confessional control. All the priests in all the world could not have inclined that intrepid spirit to accept external judgment without interior conviction. Don Francisco was of other metal; but being loyal, if foolish, he did not abandon her. He returned from the session with a dreadful finding—he and Gaspar had come to the conclusion that she was “deluded by an evil spirit.” She must immediately get the counsel of a Jesuit Father, one Fray de Padranos, who would come at her request; in a general confession she was to give him an account of her whole life, when: “God, in virtue of the sacrament of Confession, would give him more light concerning me, for these fathers were very experienced men in matters of spirituality.” Further: “I was not to swerve in a single point from the counsels of that father, for I was in great danger if I had no one to direct me.”

So loudly did Francisco croak that Teresa “did nothing but cry.” She was at the same time secretly relieved that a Jesuit was to see

her, though, as usual, an emotional cross-current set up a new fear lest she should be obliged to give up her amusements. Made up of subtilty, simplicity, supreme daring and infantile obedience, Teresa's psychology is tirelessly baffling until one finds the key. Responsive to every influence, on the surface she remains inviolate until and when she has the will to change. Once formed, her interior impulse blossoms into instant action. Not until she herself made the decision did she give up her friends.

Meantime Fray Juan de Padranos gave her spiritual counsel of an unexpected kind. He made no mention of her "attachments," breathed not a word of the "parlours," but bade her concentrate on the subjugation of the body by the will. Teresa must have listened to his instructions with considerable astonishment. Her only knowledge of "mortification" lay in the remembrance of the discipline of certain of the Sisters at St. Maria del Gracia. She had been repelled, horrified almost, by the practices of the penitents, and for this reason had rejected all idea of entering the Augustin-

ian convent. Now, after long years, her secret fear was dragged to the front. She of all women, with such pride in her delicate skin and soft white body, was called upon to mortify them! Here at least was a tangible test to which Teresa bravely rose. Here also was the voice of authority speaking in tones she could accept. If the devil through her flesh deceived her with false visions, let her subdue that flesh to destroy his power.

I watch Teresa very sadly when she leaves Padranos; she is on the first steps of a road of pain deliberately chosen and self-inflicted. She took the road, not only with courage, but with that unflinching curiosity that marks out the true explorer. She bares her shoulders, stripping off the habit with the quick, graceful gestures of her little hands. Just for a moment she stands, the scourge poised above her . . . then the lash descends. She has passed another milestone in her great adventure.



## CHAPTER IX

THE next two years were comparatively peaceful. Teresa, exploring the region of mortification, enjoyed a lightness of soul she had not previously experienced. It is true that she found some difficulty in following the instruction of Padranos when he bade her to resist as far as possible the supernatural visitations of the spirit, but with the best will in the world she could not do much in that direction:—

“By resisting the sweetness and joys which God sent me, I gained this, that His Majesty taught me Himself; for, previously, I used to think that in order to obtain sweetness in prayer, it was necessary for me to hide myself in secret places, and so I scarcely dared to stir. Afterwards, I saw how little that was to my purpose; for the more I tried to distract myself, the more our Lord poured over me that sweetness and joy which seemed to me to be flowing around me so that I could not in any way escape from it: and so it was.”

To the end of time one may suppose there will be argument as to whether or no the saint herself evoked this "sweetness and joy"; were they objectively imposed or subjectively created? Some of the most brilliant intellects of the age entered the debate which reached its height when, after the appearance of the "Life," it was argued that her revelations should not be available to the common people, but reserved for the fastidious few. Not it would seem that the discussion pivoted on the validity of her mystic experiences so much as on the effect of their recital. The decision of the majority was that Teresa's writings were the result of divine inspiration.

Even those who are dubious on the point, disclaim all doubt of Teresa's sincerity. Fray Domingo Banes, one of the foremost scholars of his time, ordered by the Inquisition to report upon the "Life," points out that:—

"There are many things in the 'Life' highly edifying and instructive for those who give themselves to prayer. The great experience of this religious, her discretion also and her humility, enabled her to speak with an accuracy

on the subject that the most learned men through want of experience have not attained. One thing only there is about the book that may reasonably cause any hesitation till it shall be very carefully examined: it contains many visions and revelations, matters always to be afraid of, especially in women who are very ready to believe of them that they come from God, and to look on them as proofs of sanctity, though sanctity does not lie in them."

The words "especially in women" are significant! Even in religion it seems the Spaniard must assign woman an inferior mental place. Apart from male complacency, however, Fray Banes is severely just:—

"Judging by the revelations made to her, this woman, even though she may be deceived in something, is not herself a deceiver, because she tells all the good and the bad so simply, and with so great a wish to be correct that no doubt can be made as to her good intentions."

But the arguments of the schoolmen fall into dust before the breath of Teresa's living word. Here is no case of a feverish imagination conjuring up objective manifestation. Her rev-

elations are of the soul. So close and so minute are her analyses of the various spiritual states through which she passed that, on human evidence alone, one must believe. Her writing—forcible, flexible, of infinite delicacy, sudden strength and swift humour—is the direct translation of her personality; at once mystic and utilitarian, ecstatic and of shrewd judgment, exquisitely feminine and of great courage with an invincible desire for truth. Such a one cannot deceive herself. That Teresa did indeed experience mystic communion, interior evidence goes to show.

Her own doubts and self-questionings were unexpectedly eased by a meeting with one of the most remarkable men of her period. This was a time of strange portents, curious longings. Spain, given over to the pride of tribute gold, saturated with the riches of her New World, could still be swayed by the sudden fierce desire for immolation that swept the land with recurrent force. Faith to the men and women of that age was so actively real that it bit into their daily lives. To them the terrors and assuagements of a future existence were beyond

dispute. The soul vibrated to the thought of ecstasy, the fear of hell. The same craving for monastic peace that drew Teresa in the zenith of her youth was shared by great statesmen, famous warriors; beauties of the Court lived in conventual retirement; princes and kings mortified the flesh with prayer and fasting. In this same year of 1557, Charles V, whose ambition had devastated Europe and made him an Imperial throne, exchanged fabulous riches and world-wide power for the obscure poverty of a Jeronimite monastery, there to end his days.

This zeal of renunciation had seized on one of the most arresting personalities of the Spanish Court, Francisco Borza, Duke of Gandia. He left his triumphs as a soldier, renounced his high position, attached to the person of the King, buried his family honours—his line had given Popes to Rome—under the sackcloth of Father Francis the Sinner, of the Company of Jesus. He was about forty-seven when he met Teresa, a memorable day for both. Father Francis had himself experienced divine favours, and he gave her unhesitating belief. As she says: "He was overjoyed and helped me

always, and gave me counsel on what he could, which was much." Moreover, he decided that she should no longer "resist" the spirit of God—"only, I should always begin my prayer by meditating on some part of the Passion; and that if our Lord should then raise up my spirit I should suffer His Majesty to raise it upwards, I myself not seeking it."

But Teresa never for long enjoyed quiet of mind. The comparative calm of the Padranos rule, culminating in the solace of Father Francis, gave way to sudden storm and stress. These were no periods of boredom in Teresa's existence, change upon change—peace and war, war and peace followed hard on the other's heels. Pandranos was sent from Avila to a distant place, and our poor Sister found herself once more without a spiritual confidant. She was deeply distressed: "My soul was bare as in a desert, most sorrowful and afraid."

Utterly forlorn, she was glad to go for a time to the house of a cousin who lived close to the Jesuit College of San Gil. It was here that Teresa met Doña Guiomar de Ulloa, a widow of considerable charm and mentality,



who formed an attachment for the Saint and introduced her own confessor, Father Aaroza, also a Jesuit. Aaroza seems to have had the gift of rare perception, and for the first time Teresa felt fully *en rapport* with the gardener of her soul:—

“He was very prudent and very gentle at the same time; for my soul was not at all strong, but rather very weak, especially as to giving up certain friendships, though I did not offend God by them: there was much natural affection in them, and I thought it would be ingratitude if I gave them up: as I did not offend God, I asked him if I *must* be ungrateful.”

Her deep black eyes glistening with tears, she waited for the verdict of the confessor. He did not fail her. Here was no case for priestly intervention. The matter lay between Teresa and her God. For the next few weeks after her return to the Encarnacion she went in the old familiar fashion from oratory and parlour, conversing with God and with man. Did she feel that the end of those years of earthly comradeship was approaching, that those days of familiar converse were drawing to a close? She was

so passionately loyal, so tumultuously grateful, our poor Teresa, who prayed all her life for a beggar who had offered her a cup of water, whose very fibres were rooted in the affection of her friends.

Her final renunciation came quickly. She severed as with a knife the last ties that bound her consciously to the world. For years she had agonised shrinking from the thought of separation. Then in a flash it was over:—

“After having been deep in prayer one day, supplicating the Lord to help me to please Him in everything, I began the hymn ‘*Veni Creator*,’ and as I was saying it, I fell into a trance—so suddenly that I was, as it were, carried out of myself. . . . This was the first time our Lord bestowed on me such complete ecstasy. I heard these words: ‘I will not have thee converse with men, but with angels.’”

This was the first of what Teresa describes as “divine locutions” which, from time to time, she was aware directed and informed her. She describes and analyses these messages in great minutiae:—

"The words are very distinctly formed; but by the bodily ear they are not heard. They are, however, much more clearly understood than they would be if so heard. . . . When we wish not to hear anything in this world, we can stop our ears, or give our attention to something else; so that, even if we do hear, we can, at least, refuse to understand. But from this locution of God to the soul there is no escape; in spite of ourselves we must listen. . . . I know this by much experience, for my resistance lasted nearly two years, because of the great fear I was in."

For a short space then we may regard Teresa as spiritually at peace, the earthly severance complete, the divine union ecstatically enjoyed. But for the soul of the warrior there can be no abiding calm. Only in the exercise of her will, the concentration of her intellect, the long and wearying fight to accomplish what she had to do was Teresa to win content; and there were yet some seven years to pass before she began the work that left her name impressed upon the ages.

The loss of Father Padranos flung her soul into a sea of doubt. Once again she was

tormented by fears lest her visions should be of the devil. Frank to the last point of outspokenness, candid to the depths of her soul, she poured out her perplexities to her advisers, who once again completely failed her. She had recourse to the harsh councils of Father Daza and to the weak and kindly Salcedo. They had nothing to offer; rather they whispered secretly of the dark things that were happening at the Encarnacion. To and fro waged the argument. Teresa's visions were of the evil one, her voices delusions: she herself deceiving and deceived. It was a critical moment for our heroine. Who should say what fate awaited her?

✓ The people of Avila began to murmur. The city broke into two camps: those who defended, those who attacked the nun. "Saint!" cried one faction, "Impostor," howled the other, and called on the Inquisition to bring Teresa to trial. The story of Magdalen de la Cruz, on everybody's lips, was held to be a parallel. She also had seen visions and dreamed dreams and had been proven liar and hypocrite. Who should say the Carmelite nun was any better than the deluded Magdalen?

For eight and thirty years that unfortunate lady had lived in the Convent of which she had been three times elected Abbess. She had been received with veneration by high dignitaries of the Church, the Inquisitor-General himself had visited her and asked her prayers. And then suddenly the sanctified Magdalen was discovered in the dungeons of the Inquisition at Cordova, charged with flagrant imposture. How far the charges were true, none can say: this, however, is sure, harried by merciless interrogation the poor thing recanted. She made a public denial of divine visitations—a rope round her neck, a candle in her hand. She was not, however, tormented further; the Inquisition were content to condemn her to perpetual seclusion in a convent of her order, to deprive her of Communion unless in danger of death, and to impose eternal silence save to her superiors and confessors.

And it was to an ordeal such as this that Teresa might have been subjected.

Remembering this, one can understand the terrible apprehension that seized on old Salcedo when Teresa poured out the story of “divine

locutions," shivering in his shoes at the bare thought of what might happen to her. Rumour grew dark, babbling tongues chattered like monkeys—this and that, that and this, until above the clamour rose a word of evil omen that, reaching Teresa even in her convent cell, struck chill to that brave heart.

The word was exorcism. The nun, clearly possessed by the devil, must be dealt with. Well might Salcedo tremble in his limbs as he went from the convent to the city, assuaging and explaining all the while.

Meanwhile Teresa's "visions" spread beyond the confines of Avila till she was talked of through the length and breadth of Spain and her partisans and her enemies disputed hourly. For Teresa kept nothing of her misgivings to herself. She laid bare every point that vexed her conscience, pouring forth daily what she felt and all she suspected. Her confidences made to Father Daza and Salcedo were not respected. The two old men must not be over blamed. They were weighted over heavily and ran about like frightened rabbits, hypnotised by Teresa's eloquence, terrified by its possi-



ble results. The more they gabbled, the more the townsfolk squealed, until the clamour rose to such height that the Inquisition intervened. Then action was precipitated by the vacillation of her latest confessor, one Baltasar Alvarez. The opinion of Ribera, that delicate, scholarly creature who has left us an imperishable record of Teresa, tells us what we want to know of this particular Jesuit:—"A man of great prayer and penances; his words were powerful in entering hearts and he was very skilful in directing souls to God."

Very skilful in directing! Of small use, therefore, to Teresa, who wanted only confirmation on the local details of the road she had mapped out. He was like so many of the tiresome priests she had to encounter, eager only to instruct, too proud or too impatient merely to elucidate. He was in sore case, this same Alvarez, at one moment prepared to wager his immortal soul on the truth of the honesty of his great penitent: at another terrified of being led into temptation, given over to the devil by the magic of her words, which falsely persuaded him she was inspired by God. He, like Salcedo, ran about dis-

tractedly, returning in moments of lucidity to chide his charge, bidding her not to offend God, so that the devil could not do her harm.

It was after an interview with Alvarez, when that priggish friar had cast her soul into deepest gloom, that Teresa heard the second of her "divine locutions." She had been to confession in the church of San Gil accompanied by her devoted adherent, Doña Guiomar, and had found small comfort in the process:—

"In great distress I left the church and entered an oratory. I had not been to Communion for many days, nor had I been alone. Though I had no one to speak to, for everyone was against me. Some, I thought, made a mock of me when I spoke to them of my prayer. . . . Others warned my confessor to be on guard against me, and some said it was clear the whole business was the work of Satan. . . . In this distress, these Thy words alone were enough to remove it, and gave me perfect peace: 'Be not afraid, my daughter, it is I, and I will not abandon thee.'"

In the tumult of relief that followed, Teresa, as though foreseeing all the contumely and suspicion that were to come, breaks into mag-

nificent defiance. Each word is a sword stroke; you see the shimmer of the blade as it thrusts and parries in passionate defence:—"Let all learned men rise up against me—let the whole world persecute me—the evil spirits torment me, but Thou, O Lord, fail me not. I know the blessed rest of Thy deliverance for them who trust only in Thee. . . ."

This one frail woman against the terrors of the Inquisition flung down her challenge: there were moments when, falling into despondency, she doubted herself, but, and this is the salient point to be remembered, confronted with the fire of deadly interrogation, she never wavered: she had heard the voice of God in her soul, and neither devil nor Bishop, Inquisition nor Pope, could shake her impregnable conviction.

But it was not only by "divine locutions" that Teresa received mystic communications. She penetrated other avenues:—

"I was in prayer one day—it was the feast of the glorious Saint Peter—when I saw Christ close by me, or, to speak more correctly, felt Him: for I saw nothing with the eyes of

the body, nothing with the eyes of the soul. He seemed to me to be close beside me; and I saw too, as I believe, that it was He who was speaking to me. As I was utterly ignorant that such a vision was possible, I was extremely afraid at first, and did nothing but weep; however, when He spoke to me but one word to reassure me, I recovered myself and was as usual calm and comforted, without any fear whatever. Jesus Christ seemed to be by my side continually: and as the vision was not imaginary, I saw no form."

The narrative, as one reads it, carries conviction. The slightest deviation, the suggestion of a "form," would invalidate the testimony. The precision of statement carries the hall-mark of truth.

Teresa's account of the visitation plunged her confessor into the deepest gloom. He raged between fear for his own soul and anger against hers. How dare this woman, this mere contumacious nun, upset all the rules of the confessional? Why burden him with her spiritual vicissitudes instead of bringing a burden of sins easy to condemn and obviously punishable? Teresa never lost the habit of hope in regard to

her advisers. She had child-like faith in their ability which perpetual discouragement did not destroy. She never realised that mentally she was head and shoulders above the little priests who dithered at her disclosures. Moreover, she had a sane belief in the value of discipline, self-accepted, and accepting a confessor as her superior official in things theological, did her best to carry out his rulings. That these rulings varied, not only from priest to priest, but from moment to moment, distressed but did not daunt her.

Relief, however, was at hand, relief to be followed by a more intensive persecution.

## CHAPTER X

WHENEVER Teresa's theological pastors and masters became irritated and confused, they invariably ordered her to write down her spiritual experiences. This they did, as we may understand, because it is far easier to scent out imposture, not to say heresy, on paper than through the spoken word. Moreover, it was impossible to divorce Teresa's personality from her utterance. They might quarrel with her "divine locutions" or her visions, they could not feel antagonism to herself. She charmed the stuffiest cleric with an assumption of his superiority, and by a delicate reticence built up her claims by never advancing them. All she asked was guidance and affection. If she rarely found the first, no one could refuse the second.

The initial account of her experiences, written for the Jesuits by the direction of Father Daza, mysteriously disappeared. Possibly it was too



hard a nut for theological jaws to tackle. In the second of her writings which has come down to us to-day, "The Relations of Her Spiritual State," this much-harried woman reviews the methods of prayer that she adopted. She knew only too well the forces arrayed against her, and that, caught napping, she might earn the rack, the thumbscrew, the rat-ridden dungeons of the Inquisition; yet in her desire for truth she faces the odds and dissects her soul in an analysis which leaves all modern attempts at psychological examination stone cold.

"Relation One" was written at the suggestion of the great Franciscan, Fr. Pedro de Alcantura. Since boyhood this remarkable man had laboured to reform the Order of St. Francis. He had founded many monasteries, enforcing in each the originally simple rule of the Order. It was he who, after years of unflagging zeal and increasing wisdom, first perceived the genius of Teresa. He saw in her, not only the mystic, but the pioneer who, having won the serenity of her own soul, burned to bring peace to others. With the vision of age still unimpaired by time or suffering, he looked into the future, and

in the anguished penitent from the Encarnacion recognised the Foundress of a great Order, the Order of the Discalced (Barefooted) Carmelites, who, abjuring material possessions, discovered spiritual power. There was a curious resemblance between the priest and the penitent, the initiate and the postulant; each had trod the path of pain of their own will, simply and with none of the superiority exhibited by lesser ascetics; each had agonised through long-drawn periods of doubt and grief, and now within a year of his death the Saint was to foretell something of the harvest the nun should reap. Who shall say, indeed, that the eyes of the seer did not pierce the veil and behold Teresa the beatified, whose imperishable beauty lights up the ages with an undying radiance?

The two were brought together by Doña Guiomar, who worked unremittingly for her friend's ease of mind. You feel the tenuous personality of the Saint in Teresa's description:—

“For forty years he slept but an hour and a half out of the twenty-four, and that the most laborious penance he underwent, when

he began, was this of over-coming sleep. . . . When he slept, he sat down, his head resting against a piece of wood driven into the wall. Lie down he could not, if he wished it; his cell was only four feet and a half in length."

Then follow further details of the mortifications Pedro endured. He ate only once a day, affirming that it was quite easy when you were used to it, and wore but the scantiest of clothes. And then at the end of a shivering recital, Teresa breaks into one of those strong, healthy, humorous appreciations of the normal that makes her so great a force in dealing with the common man:—

"The world cannot bear such perfection these days; it is said that men's health is grown feeble, and that we are not now as in those former times. But this holy man lived in our time; he had a spirit strong as those of another age, and so he trampled on the world. But if men do not go about barefoot, nor undergo sharp penances as he did, there are many ways, as I have said before, of trampling on the world; and our Lord teaches them when He finds the necessary courage."

Meanwhile, though Pedro comforted her with the assurance that her visions and locutions were truly from God, both she and he were too astute not to guard against attack in other quarters. Having constituted himself her defender he drew down the sharper comments of the jealous, and, realising that things were coming to a head, he insisted she should proceed with her "Relation." In one of her most beautiful passages she describes the first beginnings of ecstasy:—

"When I am in prayer, it is very rarely that I use the understanding, because the soul becomes at once recollected, remains in repose, or falls into a trance, so that I cannot in any way have the use of the faculties and the senses—so much so, that the hearing alone is left; but then it does not help me to understand anything. . . . At times certain impetuositities occur, accompanied with a certain fainting away of the soul for God, so that I have no control over myself; my life seems to have come to an end, and so it makes me cry out and call upon God; and this comes upon me with great vehemence. Sometimes I cannot remain sitting, so great is the oppression of my heart; and this

pain comes on without my doing anything to cause it, and the nature of it is such that my soul would be glad never to be without it while I live. . . . The distress thus occasioned is so intense that if our Lord did not relieve it by throwing it into a trance whereby all is made calm . . . it would seem to be impossible for it to be delivered from this pain."

This "Relation" is not wholly concerned with spiritual things, however. Teresa tells us in one of those spontaneous outbursts which so endear her that:—

"When I see persons making great progress, resolved, detached, and courageous, I love them much. People who are afraid and seemingly cautious in those things the doing of which is perfectly reasonable here, seem to vex me, and drive me to pray to God and the Saints to make them undertake the things that frighten them."

Pedro approved completely of the "Relation" which in its delicate discrimination of spiritual conditions, its recognition of the finest shades, remains one of the greatest essays in mysticism:—"The flight of the spirit is something so fine, of such inestimable worth, as the soul perceives

it, that all delusion therein seems impossible, or anything of the kind, when it occurs."

No wonder learned men, superstitious laity and muddle-headed priests were frightened; though for their fallings-off and lack of comprehension compensation was generally to be found. Pedro has left us his annotations of Teresa's "Relation":—

"This soul is most pure and sincere, with the most fervent desires of being pleasing unto God and of trampling on every earthly thing.

"No one converses with her, if he be not in evil dispositions, who is not moved thereby to devotion, even though she says nothing about it.

"God has given her a most wonderfully strong and valiant spirit; she was once timid, now she tramples on all the evil spirits. She has put far away from herself all the littleness and silliness of women. Besides, our Lord has given her the gift of most sweet tears, great compassion for her neighbours, the knowledge of her own faults, a great reverence for good people, and self-abasement; and I am certain that she has done good to many, of whom I am one."

Pedro also tells us of Teresa's vow: "never to leave undone what she knows herself, or is



told by those who understand the matter better, to be the more perfect." His admiration and affection for her remained undaunted by the most bitter attacks. A fine old warrior, he did not spare his aching bones nor his acute mind in her service. I like to think of him in his one poor garment, "made of sackcloth, as tight as it could be, with nothing between it and his flesh," kneeling in his cell covering tiny pieces of parchment—frugal in all things—with his queer fine writing in Teresa's vindication. Through his championship the attack was diverted from her visions, only to rage more furiously against the project which now took possession of her mind, to the outrage of many of her friends and relations.

Teresa had long been conscious of the dangers of convent life as practised under the lax rule of the period. She had said but little to the nuns of the Encarnacion, but her influence had already somewhat modified their social complexion. A few of them, at least, had realised that interior content can only come by external renunciation, and withdrawing themselves from the "parlours," they practised contemplation

in their cells. This, however, had its repercussion in the antagonism of the rest of the Sisters, who, when it became known that Teresa aspired to found a convent on the first principles of the Order of St. Carmel, vied with the ecclesiastics in their denunciation. The very word "reform" to them suggested a disintegrating influence.

Teresa loved the Encarnacion, her unbreakable fidelity had a tenderness for the small bare cell dearly familiar for over twenty years. The leafy gardens, the shady corridors, the cool space of the building, for all its leaky roof and crumbling walls, pleased her. But though the thought of separation was a knife-thrust, she fully realised that the convent, with others of its kind, was a stumbling-block on the spiritual road. A poor establishment, the Encarnacion remained restive under poverty, the expectant Sisters waiting daily for small gifts of fruit and cakes from their acquaintance. Moreover, life was passed in an unstriving leisure. Apart from household tasks and attendance at devotions, the Sisters had no regular duties or routine. They toiled not, neither did they spin;

they subsisted on the meagre endowments of the Community and outside help; an unhealthy, almost miasmatic state of things, only galvanised into vitality by meetings in the parlours, with attendant gossip and tit-bits of scandal.

Essentially a woman of action, Teresa's ideas sprang full-fledged from her brain, demanding instant shape. She formed the sudden decision to found a convent one evening in her cell. Doña Guiomar, two nieces, Maria de Ocampo and a young sister were discussing with her the difficulties confronting a contemplative in a noisy, bustling convent. Maria, pretty, frivolous and most attractive, suddenly dropped a bombshell into the conversation. "What," she remarked, "was the good of talking? Why not let all of them adopt a different method of life and live solitary like hermits?"

Teresa's practical capacity seized on the suggestion; facts, figures, cost of building and equipment, estimate of supplies, were eagerly gone into. Doña Guiomar promised to help; Maria, stimulated with her own brilliance, in-

sisted she would give her dowry to the foundation of a Carmelite community. Hopes ran high; they talked late and long. And yet, as is so often the case with feminine enthusiasms, the project might have vanished, the effervescence of a mood, but for Teresa. At that moment the indomitable woman dedicated herself to the campaign for which the long years of endurance had been a preparation. She yearned to help those Sisters who, like her, had found the path to God so flinty hard to tread. She visualised the wonder, the glory of a community restored to its first faith, its first vows. So far, however, her plan was unilluminated by the great discovery that coloured all her future life—the discovery that poverty is a fortress and a bulwark, a staff and a guiding light. Not until later did she pen that matchless passage which for ever kept her name remembered.

Listen to Teresa:—

“Poverty is a strong wall. It is a wealth which includes all the wealth of the world; it is complete possession and dominion. What are Kings and Lords to me if I do not envy

them their riches, nor seek to please them, if by so doing I should in the very least displease God? What care I for honours, if I know that the honour of a poor man lies in being poor? It seems to me that honours and riches nearly always go together; he who covets honours never hates riches, while he who hates riches seeks no honours. . . . True poverty, undertaken for the sake of God, bears with it a certain dignity, in that he who professes it need seek to please no one but Him, and there is no doubt that the man who asks no help has many friends. . . . If poverty is real, it guards purity and all the other virtues better than fine buildings."

That magnificent trumpet call which challenged Spain four centuries ago and reverberates through the whole world to-day, had no part in the thoughts of Sister Teresa that evening. Look at her, this nun, already in the middle years, without money, influence, or following, gazing with luminous eyes into the darkness of her cell. It was the beginning of as wild, as fantastic a crusade as ever made man snatch at a sword; but in the quietness of the night she saw the thing accomplished. She was

a poet and a dreamer, and therefore unafraid. She built upon a vision, and not all the devils in hell, or the ecclesiastics on earth, could shatter her belief. And yet consider her gage of battle. She, the suspected Sister of a hundred theological disputes, was to lead a band of devotees into the wilderness. She must have had prevision of the tumult that would break about her ears at the mere attempt; but if she had foreboding, she put it from her. Consumed with the passion of sacrifice, she took the first step of a road beset by roaring beasts and poison snakes—the whole tribe of petty scriveners, reverend Inquisitors, jealous nuns, and frightened priests.

It is a great moment when quietly and deliberately a man or woman decides on an enterprise for which, humanly speaking, there seems no chance; when, silent and unafraid, they look past the difficulties, the dangers, the acrimony which attends all untried things, and by a simple act of faith behold their hope accomplished. Could anything seem more unreal than that a nun, alone and with no worldly power, should found an Order, establish Convents—revolutionise the whole monastic system throughout



Spain? And yet perhaps it is so that all great things are accomplished—by faith of the soul and power of the will.

Teresa's exaltation as usual was followed by reaction. Mental strain produced bodily suffering, and in her despondency she had unpleasing visitations. She felt at times as though "demons played ball with her soul," and in her blackest mood was conscious of the presence of concrete evil. Doubtless the devil, worsted in his trial of fascination, decided to try what a little fear would do. Her concept of hell, unlike her vision of ecstasy, is concrete and bristling with the material torments in vogue at the time:—

"I was one day in prayer when I found myself in a moment, without knowing how, plunged apparently into hell. . . . The entrance seemed to be by a long and narrow pass, like a furnace, very low, dark, and close. The ground seemed to be saturated with water, mere mud, exceedingly foul, sending forth pestilential odours, and covered with loathsome vermin. At the end was a hollow place in the wall, like a closet, and in that I saw myself confined. All this was even pleasant to behold in compari-

son with what I felt there. There is no exaggeration in what I am saying."

This account of hell, written years after the experience, has a literary consciousness lacking in the other parts of her "Life" and conspicuously absent in "The Way of Perfection."

According to the authority of Don Vincente de la Fuente, whose edition of St. Teresa's works (Madrid, 1862) is generally accepted, the chapter which includes the vision is new matter. The first "Life," written at the suggestion of Fr. Pedro Ibanez, in Don Vincente's opinion ends with Chapter XXXI. The MS. disappeared and the "Life" re-written was enlarged by order of Father Garcia of Toledo—another of her innumerable confessors—after the foundation of her first Convent of St. Joseph at Avila. If we accept Vincente's view, bearing in mind the difference in the style of the passage, it seems fair to surmise that the description was "touched up" at the wish of Father Garcia. "There is no exaggeration in what I am saying," coming from Teresa, suggests a lack of that spontaneity which is her chief quality.

Doubtless the good Garcia felt that the sweetness of the favours she received from her Lord were too much emphasised for the ordinary man, and that the other side of the picture should be painted. That one may appreciate God's loving-kindness, the crack of the devil's whip should occasionally sound. But whether or no the "vermin" and the "stench" were the local colour of the period or the underlining of her confessor, we feel Teresa herself is speaking in the passage which follows:—

"These sufferings were nothing in comparison with the anguish of my soul; a sense of oppression, of stifling and of pain so keen, accompanied by so hopeless and cruel an infliction, that I know not how to speak of it. If I said that the soul is continually being torn from the body, it would be nothing, for that implies the destruction of life by the hands of another; but here it is the soul itself that is tearing itself in pieces. I cannot describe that inward fire or that despair, surpassing all torments and all pain."

But she does not dwell on her own fears; she is riven with pity for other souls in torment, and as a consequence, girding up her

loins, puts ill health behind her and concentrates on the practical details for the founding of her convent. That the idea is pleasing to God, she is assured. St. Joseph also smiles on her, and she decides her first foundation shall be dedicated to him.

The first thing was to obtain the consent of her confessor, Father Alvarez. Like his predecessors, Teresa put him in a difficult position. He could not, in the face of Alcantura's support, refuse to accept the story of Divine endorsement of her project; on the other hand, he was convinced that a more hare-brained scheme for the regeneration of the world had never been imagined even by a woman. What, a nun without money and without power reform the Order of the Carmelites? Was there ever so preposterous a notion? At the same time, he was too sensible of Teresa's gifts, the driving force of her personality, utterly to discredit her scheme. He played for time and referred the matter to the Carmelite Provincial, Father Angel de Salazar.

And now we have the first taste of Teresa's genius for handling men and matters. Hitherto

she has had experience only in things of the soul. Now she reveals a grasp of detail, a knowledge of finance and, above all, a gift for diplomacy, before which the opposition of time-servers, place-seekers and the merely worldly-wise, falls like a ninepin. She does not immediately approach Salazar, but with commendable foresight arms herself with letters of recommendation from notable men—Pedro of Alcantura and the famous Dominican Fr. Luis de Beltran of Valencia, afterwards beatified. Both of these highly commend her undertaking; Father Luis saying that “before fifty years shall pass your Religion shall be one of the most illustrious in the Church of God.”

Armed with these credentials, the faithful Doña Guiomar as ambassador bearded the Provincial. He was approbation itself, reflecting, perhaps, that if the movement were a success he would get quite a lot of the credit. Overjoyed, Guiomar took the news to Teresa, and the two women started negotiations for the purchase of a house in Avila. This put the match to the train, and opposition blazed sky-high. The town buzzed with the talk, which

spread from the castle to the counter. In the market rough peasants cracked rude jokes against the nun who wanted to set the world in order. Young gallants tittered at the notion of a woman starting a reform, old men declared the idea was a danger to the State and demanded that Teresa should be disciplined.

The jeers of Avila alone would have counted little, however. There was still a party in support of the Cepeda tradition, who, if dubious themselves, would not suffer doubt in others. The real danger lay in the inflamed suspicion of the Encarnacion. The Prioress expressed herself outraged, the Sisters followed suit. Teresa's attitude was a direct attack upon their mode of life. The flame of hatred ran swiftly through the convent, and the whole establishment—with minor exceptions—ranged itself against the recreant Sister who desired to shame them before the world. The movement involved the clergy. Doña Guiomar was attacked by her family and reproved by her confessor, who commanded her to give up a project which so scandalised the whole community. And still the heroic women clung together, pursuing their plans.



The purchase money had been raised, the vendors had agreed to the terms, the day was fixed for the transfer of the buildings. What wonder if Teresa felt that the first round of the battle had been won?

And then on the very eve of success the blow fell. Salazar, yielding to open clamour and secret influence, withdrew his permission, on the grounds—most wily Provincial—that the funds available for the endowment were too small, its chance of permanence too precarious. With the *imprimatur* of his authority Teresa could have ignored the gibes of the town and surmounted the malice of the Sisters. That withdrawn, she was exposed to all the bitterness of vindictive attack. The nuns as a body demanded her imprisonment; Salcedo shook his head and said, "I told you so." Father Daza chattered from a distance, and Alvarez, her confessor, from whom she hoped some consolation, bade her "recognise in the result that the idea was a dream, and that I ought to lead a new life by ceasing to have anything to do with it, or even to speak of it, seeing the scandal it has occasioned."

The threat of the Inquisition was revived and things got very black indeed for our Teresa. She met disaster with unflinching courage, endured the slights of the nuns with a dignified humility that won unwilling homage, and, harder still, obeyed Alvarez's order to refrain from doing anything in regard to the Foundation for six months.

But, as others besides this particular Jesuit were to learn, Teresa's diplomacy had not yet been exhausted; with her capacity for reading character, she had realised from the first that the Provincial at any moment might become a broken reed, and before he withdrew his permission she was already negotiating for other and more important support.

She chose deliberately and very wisely. The champion she selected was Pedro Ibanez, a Dominican friar attached to the famous monastery of St. Tomas. Thus she made ready for the next throw, with the powers and principalities of the Church and of Avila.

The sequel is one of the most amazing triumphs of her life.

## CHAPTER XI

WE NOW see Teresa from another angle; the struggles of the nun, the ecstasies of the mystic are merged in the constructive genius of a practical visionary. Hitherto material things had passed her by. In this, her latest and most amazing phase, we find her developing an organising capacity astounding in one without training or instruction. Suddenly she displayed the keenest instinct for a bargain, and turning her judgment to shrewd account was able to hold her own with business men, financiers and diplomatists, winning her way through the stiffest opposition. Having decided to found a convent where her Sisters could give an undivided loyalty to God, she surveyed the possibilities with the eye of a general noting the strategic points for attack and defence.

Thus she was ready for the Provincial's defection, and was able to pass six months of enforced inaction in comparative security

of mind. It had been apparent from the first that to carry out her project with any hope of success she must enlist powerful and permanent backing. Pedro of Alcantura counted only for righteousness; he vouched for her sincerity, he could not speak for her capacity in worldly matters. He could support the idea of the reform from a spiritual standpoint, he was in no wise an authority on its material possibilities. It was therefore to quite another quarter that Teresa addressed herself. Fr. Pedro Ibanez was not only a learned and a famous man, he was accounted an influential member of the most powerful Order in Spain. Intellectually Teresa was drawn toward the Jesuits, but she realised that as yet the community was too young, too struggling, with too many enemies for their partisanship to be helpful; with admirable diplomacy, she determined the Dominicans should form her chief line of support.

Ibanez, whom she selected as liaison officer, was a man of marked capacity. Dispassionate, logical, emotional appeal left him unmoved, and for reasoned argument he could always find a better answer. How then could Teresa

convince him? She took his measure very thoroughly, and with Doña Guiomar's assistance, opened the campaign. In the first place the amount of the funds at their disposal was disclosed with promises of further support. An outline of the cost of upkeep was tabulated with the conventual *régime* to which the nuns would be submitted. Having marshalled these preliminaries Teresa opened fire. Not a word of the divine approval, not a mention of St. Joseph, this admirable advocate centred her case on its practical necessities. She began with a slashing attack on the whole monastic system:—

“A monastery of women unenclosed is, I believe, the very greatest danger. Yea, more, for those who will be wicked it is, I think, a road to hell, rather than a help to their weakness. . . . I am exceedingly sorry for these houses, because our Lord must of necessity send His special inspirations not merely once, but many times, if the nuns therein are to be saved—seeing that the honour and amusements of the world are allowed among them, and the obligations of their state are so ill understood. . . . And all the while the poor things are not in

fault; for they walk in the way that is shown them. Many of them are to be pitied; for they wished to withdraw from the world—and thinking to escape from the dangers of it, and that they were going to serve our Lord, have found themselves in ten worlds at once, without knowing what to do, or how to help themselves. Youth and sensuality and the devil invite them and incline them to follow certain ways which are the essence of worldliness. They see these ways, so to speak, considered as safe there.”

No mention, mark you! of her own particular Encarnacion, all her conclusions are cited as generalities, salted with her own wit and personality.

Ibanez listened, cogitating all the pros and cons. As he subsequently told Teresa, he was not in favour of the proposition: “He had already heard the popular cry: moreover, he, as everybody did, thought it folly.” Further, he had been warned by a notability of Avila to take heed what he did in the matter of encouraging two irresponsible women—one feels sure the word hysterical was added—in a foolish enterprise. But sincer-



ity has a power which lifts it above contending forces, and the learned Ibanez, prejudiced against, found himself leaning toward Teresa.

He promised he would give his opinion at the end of eight days. Doña Guiomar, all of a flutter, attended at the appointed time. Teresa, externally calm, full of humour, and secretly enjoying the prospect of a tussle, went too. She greeted Ibanez with a smile, thanked him for giving so much valuable time to two ignorant women, inquired after his physical and spiritual well-being, and then turned on her batteries.

“Oh, what utter ruin! utter ruin of religious persons where the rules of the Order are not kept; where the same monastery offers two roads: one of virtue and observance, the other of inobservance, and both equally frequented! The way of observance is so little used . . . that the friar or the nun . . . must be more cautious, and dissemble more, when they would speak of that friendship with God which they desire to have, than when they would speak of those friendships and affections which the devil arranges in monasteries. I know not why we are astonished that the Church is in so much

trouble, when we see those, who ought to be an example of every virtue to others, so disfigure the work which the spirit of the Saints departed wrought in their orders."

After which magnificent piece of gunnery, Teresa sat down, relapsing into a quiet, almost timid woman who hung upon the words of the great man. The great man himself probably gasped. Here was a challenge with a vengeance! Was this nun after all anything but a firebrand, calculated to bring the Church into disrepute? One glance at the downcast face, the veiled eyes, the sensitive mouth, corrected the suggestion. She was the most feminine of creatures, the most astute of brains, and Ibanez fell like a ripe fruit into her hands.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the six months' probation enjoined by the detestable Alvarez found Teresa quite unperturbed. Meanwhile, Ibanez got to work; and in conjunction with Doña Guiomar, who set family wires in motion, dispatched an appeal to Rome. Further, being deeply curious as to his *protégée*, he invited her personal confidence. Once again the old arguments of divine or diabolical inspiration

were rehearsed. Ibanez, adopting a neutral attitude at first, came speedily into line, none too soon for Teresa's protection, for by this time the growling of the Inquisition had grown into a roar. Ibanez told Teresa to embody her spiritual experiences in the form of a "Life," and submit it to him that he might report to his superiors. Previous accounts of her history were shorter and more condensed. Teresa now, however, for the first time, became aware of her literary powers.

The biography indeed touches a higher level than that achieved even in her "Revelations." Discursive, unequal, in dealing with matters of daily life, it rises to genius when she describes the way of prayer. The "Life" submitted to Ibanez, as we know, was lost. The second "Life," with additions, was submitted direct to the Inquisitor Soto and has come down to us to-day.

The discovery that Teresa was not only a great religious, but also a supreme artist, considerably intrigued Ibanez. Few among his colleagues or friends were his intellectual equals, and in Teresa he found a rarely responsive

brain and so quick a comprehension that their friendship grew apace. To her his understanding was as water to a thirsty land, and for the first time in her life she felt on equal ground with a spiritual adviser. Their rôles indeed were never those of penitent and priest; they responded each to the other's needs; and if he helped her, she strengthened him.

Ibanez's influence, backed up by Alcantro's testimony, quieted the Inquisition and stemmed the tide of malice in Avila, while in the Convent of the Encarnacion Teresa's dignity of bearing, her complete simplicity, had due effect upon the nuns. By the end of the six months, events had shaped themselves in her favour. A new Rector was appointed to the Society of Jesus, one Gaspar Salazar. He was of a different temper from his predecessor Vasquez, whose hostility to the proposed Foundation had strengthened Alvarez's opposition, and Teresa was quick to seize her opportunity. She brought before him the same arguments she had offered to Ibanez, and Salazar recalling the enmity Ignatius had suffered when trying to found his Company, and sensing a similarity

between his persecution and hers, decided to back up Teresa's scheme for the establishment of purity and poverty. Taking the cue from his superior, Alvarez accordingly permitted his penitent to resume negotiations.

But Teresa was far too astute to give the opposition any loophole a second time. They objected to a "mere woman," let alone a nun, purchasing a house! Well, then, she would not appear directly in the matter, neither should Doña Guiomar. A man should act as principal and accordingly it was arranged that her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, should carry through the business. The ruse succeeded admirably. It was rumoured that De Ovalle and his family were removing to Avila, which also explained Teresa's repeated absence from the convent. But though the house was secured, the truce was but temporary, and from August to Christmas in that year of 1561 Teresa had to wade through a sea of troubles, petty spite and active hostility. It is true that Doña Guiomar was the official head, with De Ovalle, of the whole affair, but personality will tell and the wiseacres all declared that Teresa was behind

everything that happened. Money difficulties, labour difficulties, sudden moods of black doubt, and grey despondency beset our pioneer:—

“In holding the money, in finding the house, in treating for it, in putting it in order I had so much to suffer. . . . I am astonished how I could have borne it. Sometimes in my affliction I used to say: O my God, knowest that Thou commandest me to do that which seems impossible? for though I am a woman, yet, if I were free, it might be done; but when I am tied up in so many ways, without money, or the means of procuring it . . . what, O Lord, can I do?”

Everything conspired against her. But she met and conquered each obstacle in turn. The alterations cost more than had been estimated; there was no money to pay wages. She arranged with the workmen to give credit. Walls, securely built up, suddenly fell down. This last disconcerted even Doña Guiomar, who suggested that as God Himself seemed to frown on the scheme it would be better to abandon it. To which Teresa answered: “The wall has fallen? Very well, build it up again,” and as if



to justify her magnificent optimism there arrived a gift of money from her brother Lorenzo in Peru, so that all claims were satisfied.

Legend has it that the arrival of the money was followed by another and equally astounding miracle. Juan de Ovalle discovered his small son Gonzalo lying dead on the threshold of his home. He carried the boy into Teresa who received him in her arms and covering her face with her veil, prayed for the gift of his life. Presently the child stirs, consciousness returns. "The boy whom you thought dead God has given life."

This particular proof of the Almighty's favour happened to be popular—spectacle always appeals to public taste. Less obvious evidence, however, renewed the controversy. Teresa has a vision of St. Clare, who assures her of protection for the Foundation. St. Joseph also promises his aid. Avila once again grows restive, and the hubbub is renewed. A sermon is preached against the Foundation, full of such denunciation that sister Juana de Ovalle runs out of church and refuses to have anything more to do with the project. And yet,

despite the turmoil and the heated contest, the reconstruction of the little house of God continued.

But for the continued absence of the Carmelite Provincial, things could not have gone so far. In Avila, the ecclesiastic would have been obliged to take cognisance of Teresa's activities, and the knowledge would have forced his hand. As it was, he complacently remained away, and having arranged, we may suppose, *not* to be officially informed of what was happening, was able quite comfortably to sit upon the fence. He dared not maintain Teresa's position; even more, he could not denounce it in face of the probable approbation; and while he deliberated Ibanez worked. He had already framed an admirable constitution for the Foundation; together he and Teresa had discussed the best means of avoiding the direct patronage of the Carmelites without incurring their active enmity. Under the Rule of the Order the austerity of St. Joseph's would be suppressed and the whole object of the Reform shattered. On the other hand, it was no part of

Teresa's plan to cut completely loose from the parent stock. Behold then her manipulation. She places the Foundation under the control of the Bishop of Avila—and Rome gives consent!

Thus Teresa waited and watched and hoped and prayed; and on the very eve of success defeat smashed at her once again.

The Provincial, with every fatherly inquiry for her well-being, ordered her to proceed forthwith to Toledo, there to comfort a great lady bereaved of her husband. The lady in question belonged to one of the wealthiest and most famous families in Spain—Medina Celli. Her grief was so intense that her life was despaired of and it being far more important to assuage the sorrows of a titled woman than to build a house for God, it was essential that Teresa should not delay. How the wily Salazar must have welcomed the summons, if, indeed, he did not engineer it!

Teresa's supporters were afraid that without her driving force and supreme courage the project would collapse. Doña Guiomar, poor soul, stared open-mouthed at the idea

of combating single-handed the awful problem of work and wages. Teresa must defy the Provincial, invoke the aid of Ibanez, appeal to Rome. But Teresa was too clever a woman, too astute a diplomatist, to do any of these things. She realised that though Salazar had scored a point, he had not won a victory. She adopted Fabian tactics, signified her readiness to obey him and proceeded to get ready. Meanwhile she instructed Doña Guiomar that the building operations must continue.

Before she left Avila she wrote to Lorenzo in Peru, telling him how her beloved convent was progressing and the latest budget of family news. She is so utterly human and delicious that you understand how closely she was knit to her brother's heart. Tender inquiries as to his health, humorous reminders of childish days and a spirited sketch of brother-in-law Juan de Ovalle, for ever without money, and trying hard to get some out of Maria—that same Maria who lay so heavily on their young lives—who, left a widow, discovered that her husband had run through her marriage portion. Thus from agitation Teresa stepped

quietly to serenity, husbanding her resources for the moment of call. She had passed through a stress of extreme activity. There followed, as always, a period of comparative repose. It was, however, quite comparative.

## CHAPTER XII

THE road to Toledo was a rugged one. The journey through the passes of the Guadarrama cold and comfortless, keen winds, heavy snows tried the little company: Teresa, a Sister from the Encarnacion and the erratic Juan who, in the pauses of travel, enlivened the proceedings by rehearsing the possibilities of taking Maria into court on a charge of wilfully squandering—or allowing to be squandered—her marriage portion. Teresa, with her usual tolerance, let him grumble, as she let the wind howl and the snow fall, without complaint, and early in the New Year, without serious misadventure, they reached their destination.

Doña Luisa de la Cerda lived in a semi-regal state touched with the monastic rigour and the gorgeous barbarism of the time. She had heard of the nun in the Encarnacion who saw visions and dreamed dreams, and hungering



for consolation had begged the Provincial for her company, and as we have seen, Salazar was nothing loath to let her go.

Almost immediately on her arrival, Teresa's heart went out to the afflicted lady alone in the midst of fatiguing splendours:—

“I saw that she was a woman, and as much liable to passion and weakness as I was; that rank is of little worth, and the higher it is the greater the anxiety and trouble it brings. People have to be so careful of the dignity of their state, which will not suffer them to live at ease; they must eat at fixed hours and by rule, for everything must be according to their state, and not according to their constitutions; and they have frequently to take food fitted more for their state than for their liking.”

How she must have wearied of the solemn ceremony, the preposterous ritual! And yet with that innate feeling for others that is the fibre of good breeding, she omitted none of the salutations, remembered all the precedents, observed every one of the shibboleths of current society. She was, moreover, far from alien to the atmosphere; for all the freedom of the For-

tress House, the kindly laxity of Doña Beatriz, the Cepeda family was well acquainted with nice customs and courtly usage.

Teresa won her way with humorous grace, holding her own with sycophants who suspected her of currying favour with Doña Luisa, the merely frivolous who were surprised to find she was by no means a wet blanket, enforcing respect and admiration even from the servants. Her sense of fun was immensely tickled none the less, and she reveals her gift of "seeing relations" between unexpected things in a most delightful manner:—

"The Lord bestowed the greatest graces upon me, and those graces made me so free, and filled me with such contempt for what I saw . . . that I never failed to treat those ladies, whom to serve would have been a great honour for me, with as much freedom as if I had been their equal. So it was that I came to hate the very wish to be a great lady. God deliver me from this wicked artificial life."

We can see this brilliant, exquisitely simple woman fretted by non-essentials, till in a marvellous outburst she exclaims against the waste

of time involved in the remembering of titles, the considering of correct methods of address. Shade of Debrett! Her words come down to us to-day barbed with eternal truth:—

“If a man be careful to please God continually, and to hate the world, as he ought to do, I do not see how he can be equally careful to please those who live in the world in matters which are continually changing. If they could be learnt once for all it could be borne with; but as to the way of addressing letters, there ought to be a professor’s chair founded, from which lectures should be given, so to speak, teaching us how to do it; for the paper on one occasion should be left blank in one corner, and on another in a different corner; and a man must be addressed as the Illustrious who hitherto has not been known as the Magnificent. I know not where this will stop: I am not yet fifty, and yet I have seen so many changes during my life that I do not know how to live. What will they do, who are only just born, and who may live for many years?”

But in spite of these distractions and annoyances the visit to Toledo was by no means fruitless. Indeed one feels that wherever she went, whomsoever she met, Teresa would

gather new experience, fresh knowledge. It was in Toledo that she came into touch with Fr. Garcia, one of her less foolish confessors. She met also a poor relation of Doña Luisa—Maria de Salazar, a clear-sighted woman of keen brain, who, recognising Teresa's genius, decided to link herself to the nun's fortunes. Subsequently Maria became Prioress in one of Teresa's convents; on the whole she seems to have been a loyal lieutenant save for a period of intrigue when admittedly she strove against the Foundress for supremacy. But there is something in her composition, an element of calculation, that leaves one cold to her good qualities. She represents the eclectic element in the struggle as opposed to Teresa's passion of humanity, her ecstatic worship of God. A meeting with another and essentially different woman had a revolutionary effect on the whole scheme of the Reform. Maria de Jesus of Granada, a widow of middle age, had conceived the idea of founding a Carmelite convent from which the worldly element was definitely ruled out. She had put her ideas, on the same lines as Teresa's, into immediate practice, and selling all

had tramped barefoot to Rome there to interview the Pope, who, filled with astonishment at her sublime courage, gave his permission to proceed. Returning from Rome, she heard of Teresa's attempts at Avila and determined to discuss with her the whole idea. It meant that the heroic Maria had to go miles out of her way, but in the sixteenth century neither distance nor fatigue were permitted to interfere with the carrying out of ideals, and the two women, moved by the same impulse, had a long and fascinating conference. It was through her that Teresa for the first time became acquainted with the original Constitution of the Carmelites:—

“Until I spoke to her, I never knew that our rule before it was mitigated required of us that we should possess nothing; nor was I going to found a monastery without revenue, for my intention was that we should be without anxiety about all that was necessary for us, and I did not think of the many anxieties which the possession of property brings in its train.”

The germ of the idea implanted by Maria de Jesus flowered, as we have seen, into a

miracle of eloquence. Break the chains of wealth, fling off the manacles of prosperity, became the battle-cry of the Discalced Carmelites, a cry that resounded throughout Christendom.

Maria met with opposition as fierce as did Teresa. On her return to Granada, both the Carmelites and the City Fathers refused her permission to found a convent. She was threatened with spiritual, and other pains and penalties, and an inflamed opinion demanded she should be publicly whipped. She won through, however, and in 1563 her convent was opened—under the protection of the Bishop.

Bishops seem, indeed, to have been the bulwark of the pious against the attacks of the Orders, and we may realise Teresa's thankfulness that the little house in Avila—still incomplete—was under episcopal patronage.

But she was now confronted with a knot that the Bishop could not help her to untie. She was possessed by the vision of poverty; the trouble was, how could she convince her supporters—the keen-brained Ibanez, the disciplined Pedro of Alcantura—to accept her



conclusion? Ibanez was thoroughly upset and not a little angry. He had agreed that the Carmelite Order had fallen into a bad way, that a convent on stricter lines was essential. But this revolutionary doctrine was another pair of shoes, and he wrote long and intensive arguments, quoting much theology, against it. Other learned men gave their opinion; and most of them characterised the notion as foolish, if not wicked. Pedro alone did not fail her. He told her to be of good cheer, and to continue undeterred with her purpose. It seems to have dawned upon both him and Teresa that while theologians are admirable in matters of theology they cannot be regarded as safe guides to the best methods of attaining perfection, of which both Teresa and Pedro were well qualified to judge. Secure in the old man's support, she asked for no more advice; especially as she learnt in a vision of her Lord's approval.

Doña Luisa was enthusiastic for the idea and promised all possible help in the matter of money or wire pulling, and gradually Ibanez was persuaded, admitting with his usual intellectual honesty that his first conclusions had

been wrong. Meanwhile the Provincial Salazar had reconsidered his determination to suppress the Reform. Teresa had won golden opinions at Toledo, and the approbation of a Palace always carries its own weight.

In the Saint's absence, Avila, too, grew kinder. Stories of her social success satisfied local pride, and accounts of her visions no longer raised laughter and indignation. Where a poor nun earned contumely, the friend of a Duchess might be pardoned visitations even from Christ. It is curious that those same circumstances which roused dispute and hot antagonism were after her death treasured as evidences of Holy writ. That transpiercing of Teresa's heart when in a state of ecstasy "by a long spear of gold, and at the iron point a little fire" which caused the ungodly to mock was subsequently claimed as proof positive of the divine love, and the "pierced" heart placed on the high altar of the Carmelite church in Alba de Tormes. While she lived, however, opinion remained divided; for her to-day, against to-morrow.

At the moment, the tide being in her favour,

Salazar gave permission for her to leave Toledo:

"If I wished to return I might do so; if I wished to remain I might for a certain time." The news was balm to the exiled woman, but, as usual, joy was tempered. Within a little while the election of Prioress at the Encarnacion was due; Teresa learnt to her dismay that some of the nuns were determined to give their vote to her:—

"The very thought of this alone was a great torment to me; for, though I was resolved to undergo readily any kind of martyrdom for God, I could not persuade myself at all to accept this; for putting aside the great trouble it involved—because the nuns were so many—and other reasons, such as that I never wished for it . . . it seemed to me that my conscience would be in great danger; and so I praised God that I was not then in my convent. I wrote to my friends and asked them not to vote for me."

Doña Luisa's sorrow at losing her consoler formed an additional reason for delay. But Teresa could never pad her conscience, and from the moment Salazar sent for her she was interiorly anxious to go back. And so, after

many tears from her hostess and the general regrets of the household, she set out for Avila, despite the torrid heat and her labouring heart. Indeed, as she tells us: "Having left Toledo I travelled in great joy, resolved to suffer most willingly whatever our Lord might be pleased to lay upon me." For the moment, however, things went well. She reached Avila to find her friends and supporters in full force. Pedro of Alcantura, who had come in haste and suffering to help her, was staying with Salcedo, whose finicky doubts removed, was ready to give all possible assistance to the Foundation. With him was Fr. Daza also in line, while Ibanez, who only needed intellectual conviction to become emotionally red hot, was at hand to advise exactly how to overcome the foe. Even these did not end the list of her allies. The Bishop himself had come to Avila, and to him went the aged Pedro, determined to gain support for Teresa's plan of perpetual poverty. The good old man had a tough job. It is difficult, not to say embarrassing, for a bishop to give his *imprimatur* to a project which proclaims the virtue of communal indigence. Individuals may and doubtless

ought to discard property, but to raise the banner of mendicancy and enlist large bodies of recruits is another matter. But Pedro triumphed and the Bishop gave his blessing, whereat, having accomplished his life's work, the saint returned to his cell and shortly died.

He stands out as one of the shining lights that shed healing and beneficence on Teresa's path. He had both vision and shrewdness, could sense the spiritual value of an idea and take practical steps for its protection. A benign old man. Teresa must have missed him.

It remained now only to receive the papers from Rome, which when arrived gave power to proceed. It was necessary, however, for fear of stirring up fresh protest, to go quietly to work. In the first place, Teresa, back in the Encarnacion—the election safely over—had to find a reason for going to Avila that would assuage the nuns. Without her supervision, building operations always slackened. No one else could get things done. Here again luck was with her—if luck be the proper term. Juan, the thriftless, on his way home was taken ill and opportunely put up in the house—or such part as was habit-

able. His wife being at Alba, and no other relative available, the Prioress gave Teresa leave to nurse him, which most gladly she did, at the same time speeding up the workmen with such goodwill that the repairs rapidly got finished—Juan, as by a miracle, fitting his recovery to time with the work. It will be remembered that the house had been bought in Juan's name as cover for Teresa and Doña Guiomar; it was therefore held quite reasonable that the nun should remain till he was convalescent.

Now, then, was the appointed time when the Convent of St. Joseph should be opened. Everything must be done with due reverence and in extreme taste. Only Teresa could have combined the operations. With breathless speed the last of the small bare cells was finished, the figures of St. Joseph and our Lady were put in their niches over the door, the poor little cracked bell—funds would not permit a new one—duly hung:—

“When everything was settled, our Lord was pleased that some of us should take



the habit of St. Bartholomew's Day. The Most Holy Sacrament began to dwell in the house at the same time."

The consecration of the House, fruit of long hours of difficulty and organising, was one of the sweetest moments of Teresa's life. She beheld her dream accomplished, her vision come true. Such a fulfilment is compensation for unimaginable trials—a fulfilment that no future, however storm-tossed, could deprive her of. Doña Guiomar, faithful and devoted, did not share her joy. She was at home, immersed in family duties; Pedro of Alcantura, on his deathbed, could only send his prayers. Two nuns from the Encarnacion, her sister and the convalescent Juan, Salcedo and a few less notable adherents and a young priest, were with her when Fr. Gaspar Daza—rid of all his silly apprehensions—said Mass, waiting breathlessly while the novices of the Foundation took their vows. It was a very simple, lovely ceremony. The chapel, humble in structure, must have glowed with tender triumph; Teresa, white-robed, with eyes ashine and

eager, tremulous hands; Juana, radiating sisterly pride, and Salcedo all paternal and uplifted.

The novices, the first of Teresa's daughters, symbolised the new Order of Mount Carmel, in rough linen with bare feet:—

“I felt as if I were in bliss, when I saw the Most Holy Sacrament reserved, with four poor orphans—for they were received without a dowry—and quiet servants of God established in the house. It was our aim from the beginning to receive only those who, by their example, might be the foundation on which we could build up what we had in view—great perfection and prayer—and effect a work which I believed to be for the service of our Lord, and to the honour of the habit of His glorious Mother. This was my anxiety.”

Teresa never seems to have realised that she had lit a fire which was to grow into a beacon flaming to the skies. But if she had glimpsed what was to come it would in no way have defeated her joyous satisfaction in the accomplishment of an immediate aim. She had founded a tiny little convent where all told, some thirteen souls, twelve nuns and a

Prioress, were to live communally poor and spiritually rich. It was inevitable a seed so sown, in quietness and sincerity, should spread into a forest. Only from small beginnings do great things come, and that which is born of sacrifice and prayer has in it life eternal.

But though the foundation of St. Joseph was in being it was still in swaddling clothes, and the first period of its existence was precarious and stormy.

## CHAPTER XIII

It is not given to the idealist to enjoy more than a moment of content. Between vision and fulfilment there is always a discord; practice and imagination can never be in permanent agreement, and the dream always loses something of ecstasy in contact with the business. Teresa, after the concentrated fever of action, fell suddenly into doubt and despair. All the arguments and reproaches which invade the sensitive crowded in on her. Had she used her personality unfairly? Had her enthusiasm and driving force been justified? Suppose St. Joseph's did not fulfil her hopes and failed to be self-supporting? She saw her beloved daughters starved in body and tortured in spirit. Perhaps her critics had been right and the whole project had emanated from the devil:—

“Thoughts of this kind he put before me; and they were so many that I could think of nothing else; and with them came such distress,

obscurity and darkness of soul as I can never describe. When I found myself in this state, I went and placed myself before the Most Holy Sacrament, though I could not pray to Him; so great was my anguish that I was like one in the agony of death."

She found a way out of the darkness, however. The root of fear lay in her apprehension lest she should be sent from St. Joseph's back to the Encarnacion. Accordingly she "promised before the Most Holy Sacrament to do all in my power to obtain permission to enter this house, and if I could do it with a good conscience, to make a vow of enclosure. When I had done this, the devil fled in a moment and left me calm and peaceful."

Miasma, however, was finally dispelled by a call to immediate action. Barely had Teresa time to compose herself—she had not slept for nights—when she was summoned to appear before the Prioress of the Encarnacion to answer for her conduct. She left St. Joseph's distressed indeed, but not defeated. There went with her Salcedo, Fr. Daza and the young priest Julian de Avila. He had formed a great devotion for

Teresa, and for the next twenty years—to the end of the Saint's life—dedicated himself to her service—her squire, her chaplain, who took upon his shoulders the arrangements for the weary journeyings from Foundation to Foundation.

The Prioress was in a state of virtuous indignation. It was the old story: Teresa had aspersed the convent, the Sisters, the very Order of the Carmelites, by her behaviour. What, she wanted a convent of strict observance where poverty and prayer were the chief observances? Well, and what about the Encarnacion? Was not that poor enough—not to say prayerful? It was obvious, continued the Reverend Mother, that Teresa had started St. Joseph's for her own ends, that she might make a stir in the world and get herself talked about. The accused was very quiet; she asked pardon if she had been to blame, but submitted that what she had done was from love and admiration of the Order. Against her will the Prioress was assuaged. How could she maintain a rancour against a creature at once so yielding and inflexible, so tender and aloof?



Teresa submitted that she had been in grievous fault as to her own omissions and commissions, but in the matter of the Foundation she had been dominated by "a great and resolute determination." For, as she urged, "no matter what may be—if you fall dead on the road, if you faint with sufferings on the way—yea, if the world be destroyed—all is well if you reach your goal."

And this delivered with a quietness more loud than any noise, with a serenity and sweetness that left no room for anger; well might the Prioress, unable to cope with the astonishing Teresa, send for the Provincial. He admittedly was more difficult to deal with. There was the matter of the Bishop under whose authority the Foundation had been placed to the flouting of Salazar. But, as Teresa very well knew, this particular point was in her favour. There was no great amity between the dignitaries of the Church and the Orders. It was a case of the regular army and guerilla bands of sharpshooters, each secretly feared and belittled the other. But in so far as Teresa was sheltered by a Primate, a mere Provincial

could not openly condemn her, much as he would have liked to send her to the dungeons, if not to the rack. Salazar therefore was constrained to temporise. He commanded her to speak in her defence, before all the nuns assembled. They met in the chapel, those two hundred women, and the accused stood before them. We may picture their pinched faces as we realise their petty souls. Poor things, how should they understand the unassuageable desire for perfection that tore Teresa's very fibre? How should they comprehend the steadfast spirit that even in defeat remained inviolate? But for all their anger and intolerance, they were no match didactically for our heroine. She gave point upon point, and at the finish put them to the rout:—

“They said I was giving cause for scandal in the city by setting up novelties. All this neither troubled nor distressed me in the least, though” (most wise Teresa) “I seemed to feel lest I should appear to make light of what they were saying. . . . As I was perfectly calm and our Lord helped, I explained everything in such a way that neither the Provincial nor those

who were present found any reason to condemn."

Confusion of the Prioress, mortification of the nuns, chagrin of the Provincial, who, being the shrewdest of them all, relapsed into compromise. If the new monastery prospered and the city grew quiet, he would give Teresa leave to live in it! The sequel to which concession is an instructive one.

Avila, in a state of incoherent excitement, boiled over with wrath. An unbearable affront had been offered to masculine pride and vigour. In the teeth of the town's opposition, surreptitiously and by lying device, the mischievous nun had carried out her design. She and her accomplices had purchased a house, reconstructed and finally founded a new-fangled convent which flouted recognised and well-established institutions. The man in the street complained to the city council, the city council reported to the Governor, the Governor called on the Provincial—St. Joseph's must be suppressed; its existence was a visible wrong to the State; the Most Holy Sacrament must be removed, the novices dispersed. So far, so good.

Who was going to put these things into operation? Public meetings were held, protests organised; the people of Avila ran to and fro calling first on the Governor, then on the Provincial—the Bishop fortunately was absent from the city. Finally it was resolved to use force. The parish Bumble and his officers battered at the door of the convent and commanded the four frightened little novices to come forth. Only the remembrance of the Bishop and a lurking fear of committing sacrilege kept the emissaries on the threshold. They thrust out their chins, shouldered their arms, bent their brows on those quiet, shrinking figures. But the daughters of Teresa had something of their Mother's spirit. They refused to come out; more: they invited the beadle to come in—if he were prepared to face the wrath of God in so doing. Monsieur Bumble was not prepared, and after further threats and menaces, called off his myrmidons and slunk away. The news ran through the market-place and switched popular feeling toward Teresa. But the matter had passed the stage of popular control. The Governor, under authority of the King, con-

vened a meeting before which St. Joseph's convent and the whole spirit of the Reform was brought to trial.

Meanwhile the Prioress of the Encarnacion commanded Teresa not to move a finger in the matter. Moreover, she insisted that the unhappy idealist ought to give up the project altogether. Our nun was in sore case, and only the devotion of her friends, as fiery and spontaneous as the anger of her enemies, upheld her. Salcedo, Daza and Julian de Avila were in the forefront of the battle. The nobleman and the priest, now that the issue was translated from spiritual to material grounds, were unflagging in their zeal, as ready to die in defence of St. Joseph as they were quick to doubt the inspiration that had built it.

The day of ordeal drew near. Teresa, forbidden to appear and without money to brief an advocate, was by no means unrepresented. The court included the Governor and Council of Avila, the municipality and representatives of the common people, the Bishop's Vicar-General, and two delegates from each of the religious Orders. What a pother about a con-

vent designed for the shelter of thirteen poor nuns! What a realisation of the force, the power, the blinding splendour of sincerity! All the pomps and panoplies of the world against one woman!

The Public Prosecutor opened in the best traditional style. Nobody wanted the convent. Teresa had founded it to please herself, in defiance of the law and of public opinion. No convent could be founded save by permission of the city—that permission had never been obtained. Further, what was going to happen to Avila if unauthorised nuns were to start unwanted convents all over the place? Unendowed convents must fail, which meant that the citizens of that much-burdened place would have to deny themselves food, not to mention clothing, to support hordes of invading mendicants, and all because of a feather-brained religious, who claimed to have received divine instruction!

Loud applause, and a general feeling that Teresa, let alone St. Joseph, had lost the day. There fell on the assembly that momentary hush that anticipates sentence, when from the body of the hall there rose the tall figure of a



Dominican in dead black robes. It was not the good Ibanez, not the learned De Beltran, both Teresa's staunch supporters. A new and to her unknown adherent had appeared—Fr. Domingo Banes—that same keen spirit who later censored the Saint's "Life" on behalf of the Inquisition. He had come to the trial a disinterested representative of his Order, but as he listened to the prosecution, that passionate zeal that made so many and such divers champions for Teresa, stirred within him. What, were they gathered together in solemn assembly because a handful of Carmelite nuns sought shelter? Is it possible that the presence of these obscure and trembling women had shaken Avila to its foundations? Where is the dignity, the reason, the justice of the city?

The alchemy of rhetoric will dissolve the strongest combination—for a moment. In the pause that followed Avila beheld itself ridiculous, a condition unbearable to the haughty Spanish mind, and for the time being danger was averted. The court made no order in favour of St. Joseph, but issued no decree against it. Matters remained at the same dead level

for the next few months. Father Daza, the representative of the Bishop, withstood all attempts to close down the convent, and the Cathedral clergy, though secretly siding with the prosecution, dared not openly support it. But though worsted in their action the opposition was not disposed of. It was decided to take the matter to the Law Courts of Madrid, and a brief was prepared for the consideration of the Royal Council. On the other side, Salcedo got busy and despatched an emissary with a statement of Teresa's schemes. To and fro the battle raged; a point is scored by Avila, judgment on detail inclines to Teresa. Finally the Crown nominated a notary to receive evidence on both sides, which being done, the whole dispute fell, Spanish fashion, into legal oblivion, there to remain for evermore.

And thus Teresa, without money, power or influence, supported only by the devotion of her friends and the purity of her intentions, defeated the wealth, authority and prestige of a great city. But the battle was not yet over. It was suggested that Avila—and sup-

posedly the Provincial—would tolerate the new convent if it were endowed. Now indeed was Teresa tried, for her sudden and unlooked-for friend, Fr. Banes, allied himself with the proposal. He could see nothing but disadvantage from perpetual poverty. No wonder that Teresa shifted the responsibility on to the Divine shoulders: “O Lord, this house is not mine, it was founded for Thee; and now that there is no one to take up the cause, do Thou protect it.”

Even so, she was heavy-hearted and, inclined to doubt her own prudence, decided to accept the compromise. This, however, was Teresa in depression. The inevitable reaction brought such a flood of eloquence that she tackled Banes and won him to her side, and reinforced by a visitation from Pedro of Alcantura—some three months dead—rescinded her consent on the very eve of the settlement, and dealt the prosecution a resounding blow. She followed up her advantage and induced Banes to interview Salazar. The Provincial, not entirely loath to be persuaded, consented to recognise

the Foundation. Further—a notable triumph this—he gave Teresa permission to leave the Encarnacion for her own convent, and to take with her certain of the Sisters “for the performance of the divine office and the training of those who were in the house.”

And so after two years of unremitting struggle, on a winter’s day in 1563, Teresa came to St. Joseph’s once again, and entered barefoot and overjoyed the little convent:—

“While praying in the church before I went into the house, and being as it were in a trance, I saw Christ, who, as it seemed to me, received me with great affection, placed a crown on my head, and thanked me for what I had done for His mother.”

The Foundation, as a fact accomplished, won golden opinions as easily as it had earned disapproval. The people eagerly flocked to the convent, offering alms and asking prayers; and so persistent were these supporters that more nuns were received, not, however, in excess of the number originally decided. Teresa, with expert knowledge of her sex, was never in favour of large convents. Women in the herd

lose their individual quality and grow terrible as an army with banners: "As the Sisters are few in number . . . they need not be a burden nor troublesome to anybody; for our Lord will care for them, as He has hitherto done."

Meanwhile she sunned herself in the atmosphere of spiritual content, happy that she was allowed to observe the simple severity of the convent *régime*:—

"We keep the rule of our Lady of Carmel, not the rule of the mitigation, but as it was settled by Fr. Hugo, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, and given in the year 1248, in the fifth year of the Pontificate of Pope Innocent IV. All the trouble we had to go through, as it seems to me, will have been endured to good purpose. And now, though the rule be somewhat severe—for we never eat meat except in cases of necessity, fast eight months in the year, and practise some other austerities besides, according to the primitive rule—yet the Sisters think it light on many points, and so they have other observances, which we have thought necessary for the more perfect keeping of it. And I trust in our Lord that what we have begun will prosper more and more that promise which His Majesty gave me."

It was when she entered the Convent of St. Joseph that Teresa, with a long backward look, severed the last link which bound her to the Fortress House. She must have looked with tender eyes after the eager girl, the fervent novice, the troubled nun—Teresa Ahumada de Cepeda, whose name on the threshold of a new existence she cast from her—to be known henceforth as Teresa de Jesus!



## CHAPTER XIV

THE next five years were the most peaceful of Teresa's life. It is true that her desire to be an unimportant member of the community was frustrated, and that the nuns of St. Joseph, petitioning the Bishop, forced her to become Prioress; but after the first disappointment she accepted the inevitable and filled the office with a practical capacity that amounted to genius. It was during those five years that Teresa revealed another side of her temperament. She viewed life from a fresh angle and found increasing joy in the development of untried qualities. Having founded a convent where under the strictest rule she and her nuns might worship God, the next step was to infuse the community with enthusiasm, not for their own souls but for other peoples'. She made them realise the responsibility incurred by a sheltered life. They must wrestle against the evil that afflicted

others in perpetual warfare. Teresa herself was attacked with poignant suffering for all heretics, and would have endured the torments of hell to lead one poor creature to the light:—

“What does it matter if I stay in Purgatory until the Day of Judgment if my prayers save a single soul? how much more if they save many and give glory to God? Care nothing for any earthly pain when there is question of rendering some greater service to Him who suffered so much for us.”

But, and in this we recognise the essential quality of greatness, she allied the ideal with the real. It was not enough to pray, work also was essential. It was good to see visions, but meals must be cooked, beds made, the routine of the house fulfilled in perfect excellence. There were no lay Sisters in the convent—a small and inconvenient building—and Teresa took her full share of the most onerous work. She was a genius at cooking and prepared the daintiest little meals from the most unpromising material. The nuns regarded her with wondering affection. She was beyond and above their comprehension. How should they understand a

Reverend Mother who, saucepan in hand, would go off into ecstasy, and coming back to earth continue stirring the sauce? Only the industrious could do justice to Teresa's cooking: she continually maintained that "he who does not work neither should he eat." The Sisters laboured long and earnestly at spinning. They were forbidden to ask for alms except in cases of great necessity. They fasted often sometimes because there was no food:—

"And if now and then there was not sufficient food for us all, on my saying that what we had was for those who wanted it most, not one of them would think she was in need; and so it remained till God send enough for all."

The simple, beautiful life of this small group of devotees thrilled the imagination of the people, and the "torno," a revolving shelf of wood, the channel of communication between convent and the outer world, held offerings of bread and cheese and fruit from rich and poor. Teresa reveals herself most completely as leader and administrator in "The Way of Perfection." Her daughters must not suppose she wishes

them to lead only a contemplative life—if they have the gift of contemplation let them with God's help develop it—but for the rest:—

“There is no reason why because prayer is the business of all of us in this house, everyone should be contemplatives. . . . The contemplative life is not necessary to salvation, nor an essential to it, nor will the lack of it prevent your reaching great perfection. . . . If there be no lack of humility I do not believe that those who are not contemplatives will be worse off in the end. . . . Martha too was holy although they do not say she was contemplative.”

Teresa's philosophy has a sanity and humour independent of time. She had suffered more than most from the social opinion which holds that woman is mentally if not spiritually inferior to man. She had surmounted the shibboleth and in the teeth of public criticism achieved a significant and most romantic success. But having shown that woman can turn her genius for home making to serve other ends, she by no means decries the home itself. Having proved her capacity for leading a crusade, she returns with renewed zest to the making of an

omelette, "God walks even among the pots and pans," was one of her favourite sayings.

One gets a vivid picture of Teresa at St. Joseph's. The earliest to rise, she leaves her cell—furnished only with a bed, no chair, no table, no rug to soften the stone floor—and joins her daughters in prayer from six till eight. Mass follows and then the question arises as to food. Is there anything to eat? if so, at ten in summer, eleven in winter, a bell calls them to the refectory, sometimes for bread only, at others when the "torno" has been replenished, fish, cheese or eggs. After this light refreshment came the hour of recreation, when over their spinning the Sisters could talk as they pleased. In summer, recreation was followed by a siesta—or contemplation—each in her own cell. Close personal friendships were forbidden, demonstrations of affection were against the rule. At the same time:—

"It is often necessary to show some tenderness in our love, and even to feel it; we must sympathise with many of our Sisters' trials and weaknesses, insignificant as they may be. Sensitive natures feel very keenly slight

troubles which others would laugh at. If you are stronger minded still, pity your neighbours, and do not be astonished at them. . . . Let us estimate ourselves at our weakest moments."

At two, vespers were said, followed by an hour's reading. Compline came next and at eight the bell rang for a silence unbroken till the following day; then Matins and so at eleven to bed. Only the simplest kind of needlework was sanctioned, rich embroideries were forbidden, and there was no discussion as to price. All articles were sold for the figure the customer named. If the amount were not enough—well, the work, being unproductive, was abandoned. In this convent the institution of the "parlour" was unknown. The nuns were allowed to speak only to their nearest relatives, and even then not alone, and the keys of the gateway and the door were kept only by the Prioress. Impossible in that atmosphere to choose a divided path. Here was no union of God and Mammon. If you could serve the Lord in austerity, you remained. If not—you went! Doña Guiomar, eager to enter the convent she



had done so much to help, found herself unable to endure the rigour of the life. Teresa gently bade her return to her family. She could serve God at home. Here also came Maria de Ocampe, the girl whose laughing challenge had inspired the first beginnings of the Reform. She offered up her dowry and her obedience at the altar, and in the full flush of beauty and charm, took the veil. It was a notable day at St. Joseph's.

Teresa must have seen herself in that radiant girl—how long, how hard the road which she had travelled since she took the habit at the Encarnacion. On occasions such as this the convent thrilled with joy. Flowers filled the tiny church with scent and colour, candles were lit, and hymns sung to the accompaniment of the pipe, the drum, the cymbals and the tambourine, which to this day repose in sanctity under the nuns' safe keeping.

It was at St. Joseph's that Teresa wrote her "Life" for the second time, at the command of Fr. Garcia, together with an account of the Foundation of St. Joseph. Later, at the urgent demand of the nuns, for instruction in

prayer, came "The Way of Perfection." You may still see the little cell where genius worked, no table for books, no chair, no stool. Teresa generally wrote crouching on the floor, the paper resting on the window sill. Glass there was none in the convent—it cost too much. The windows were covered with canvas through which the winter wind blew shrilly. But Teresa was impervious to cold. Her fingers warm and tingling penned the winged words which bore her name to the four corners of the earth. Oblivious of time and of fatigue, she worked far into the night.

And yet through all her duties and responsibilities she preserved her sense of fun. In the midst of the most dreadful rigours and mortifications she would see the funny side of things and startle the grave nuns with merry laughter. "If Satan could love," she said once, "he would not be Satan." She might have added that if he could laugh he would cease to be the devil.

And meanwhile with the steady growth of her mentality went the emergence of character. She had always shrunk from assertion, hating to order or reprove. Now, however,

naturally and easily she took command and ruled her daughters with unflinching justice. She regarded them, not as weak women, but as warriors of the Lord:—

“It is well that the Lord should see that we do all in our power like soldiers, who, however long they have served, must always be on the alert to fulfil their Captain’s orders, since it is he who pays them well for it. How much better will our King pay us than those of earth. The measure of our ability to carry a heavy cross or a light one is love.”

Teresa led her nuns as a general leads his army. We can trace the influence of those heroic legends which thrilled her youth; we hear again the echo of Jimena Blasquez’s fighting call: “My kinswomen! Do like me and God will give us the victory.” Like all good soldiers, Teresa founded her rule on obedience. “I cannot understand what anyone is doing in a monastery if, after she has so made a vow of obedience, she does not fulfil it as perfectly as possible.” Further, she insisted on due observance of the laws of health. Fastidiously clean herself, she poured scorn on the Sisters who “prayed”

God to remove the unpleasing insects that infested their rough garments, and recommended a lavish use of cold water. Water to Teresa was always a favourite symbol, and her most eloquent passages are centred round its imagery:—

“What would become of mankind with no water to wash in? This living celestial water is limpid, undisturbed, and unmixed with any earthly matter, for it has come straight from heaven. The soul which has once drunk of it is cleansed and left pure and free from all sins. We are powerless to obtain this water for ourselves, because perfect contemplation and divine union are high and supernatural graces given by God to the soul that it may be washed and left stainless and purified from the mire contracted by its sins. The water of sensible devotions, obtained by the use of the intellect, has run its course over the earth and is not imbibed directly from the source itself. Therefore whatever benefit we may derive from it, it always contains a certain amount of mud, and is never so pure and limpid as the other. I do not call prayer made by thinking over a subject ‘living water,’ for I believe that, in spite of all our efforts, owing partly to physical causes and partly human nature, it always retains some-

thing from which we should like it to be freed."

Her intense appreciation of "living water" does not in the least clash with her admiration for intellect. "Learning gives great light on all points. There is need to consult men who are both spiritual and learned." Throughout "The Way of Perfection" we encounter the same balanced judgment and keen insight patterned with spontaneous liveliness of thought and phrase. She knows the failings of her sex to the last iota. Do not, she insists, be content and accept the rulings of a priest to the discontent of your own conscience. Fight to discover the will of God for yourself:—

"It is enough to unsettle all the nuns if their conscience tells them one thing and their confessor another. Where they are allowed no other director I do not know what to do, nor how to quiet their minds, for he who ought to bring them peace and counsel is the very author of the evil. . . . God forbid that the religious should be directed entirely by one priest, if he is ill-instructed, however saintly his spirit may appear, and perhaps be in reality. The greater

favours our Lord shows you in prayer, the more need is there that you should be well instructed about your devotions, prayer and all your other duties."

It must, I think, have been "The Way of Perfection"—Teresa's army regulations—which first crystallised her ideas into a definite scheme to extend the Reform beyond the walls of one small convent, and start Foundations throughout Spain. Slowly at first and as always with misgivings enthusiasm stirred; she saw the Carmelites restored to their old purity, their first fervour, she beheld monasteries, small mean buildings, made glorious by spiritual light, spring up in desert places. She trembled at the glory of her vision—but with implicit faith believed:—

"Is it not beautiful," she asks, "that a poor nun of St. Joseph's may reach at last to have the dominion of the whole earth and its elements? And can it surprise us if by the favours of God the saints exercise over them such a sway? Fire and water obeyed Saint Martin, birds and fishes Saint Francis; and so with others, everything on earth was subject to



them by reason of their striving to hold it all as nothing and to give themselves in very truth and with all their strength to the Lord."

But as yet there seemed no possible channel by which to launch her project. To suggest a new Foundation would be to revive the old opposition, the old sneers. What, having founded one convent she is agog to start another? Are there any limits to the vanity, the self-seeking of this foolish nun. And yet she could not reconcile herself to the thought that her daughters' great worth and valour—"which God gave them that they might bear suffering—were not for some great end. I looked on myself as on one who, having great treasures in her keeping, wished all to have the benefit of it, but whose hands were restrained from distributing it."

The impetus which fired her desire came from a wandering Franciscan, Fr. Maldonado. He preached in the little chapel on what he had seen in the Indies and thundered out the need of incessant prayer that the millions and millions of souls there perishing might be saved.

Teresa, carried away by the dreadful picture, wept bitterly, crying to the Lord to show how she could help. The Lord gave consolation and appropriate advice telling her—interiorly: “Wait a little, my child, and thou shalt see great things.”

It was not for long she had to wait.

Meanwhile, as always happened when Teresa entered on a fresh phase of spiritual or intellectual growth, she grew disquieted, being seized with fears as to the state of her soul. Fr. Garcia, who seems to have had more sense than most of her confessors, advised her to get permission to commute her vow of perfection. This vow, it will be remembered, pledged her “never to leave undone what she knows herself, or is told by those who understand the matter better, to be the more perfect,” and its fulfilment necessarily occasioned considerable confusion, it being impossible always to determine what was the “more perfect way.” Moreover, the fact that other people’s judgment was frequently in antagonism to her own made confusion worse confounded. Fr. Garcia, however, relieved the strain and Teresa, her

vow commuted, was able to concentrate on her latest and—according to public opinion—her wildest project.

But once again she received unlooked-for aid. A fresh champion for the new Crusade appeared in the person of no less a dignitary than the General of the Carmelites himself, Rubeo of Ravenna. By the order of the Pope, Rubeo had undertaken to visit and reform every monastery of the Carmelite Order. Accordingly he set out on a long journey through Spain, France and Italy, arriving at Madrid in June, 1566. The occasion of his tour was the decision of the Council of Trent to re-organise the Religious Orders principally in the matter of Poverty; until then a religious, though not permitted to hold personal property, could use certain revenues. Sometimes, for example, special cells were founded and endowed with a right of occupation by a member of the founder's family, one cell often being more highly capitalised than another, which obviously promoted social inequality. The custom had become so ingrained in the monastic system that the enactment of the Council met with the strong-

est opposition from all sides. Rubeo, who strove hard to carry out his mandate, had the greatest difficulty with both Monks and Priors—a difficulty which had its sequel in the concentrated persecution of Teresa and her Reform some eight years later—1574. Rubeo had already experienced such unhappy things that his arrival at St. Joseph's on the express invitation of its Foundress, was as balm to his hurts.

The story of Teresa's reception of the General is delicious. In the first place it was necessary to placate him for having placed the convent under the protection of the Bishop instead of the Order. This was easy. He surrendered with Italian fervour to her charm and blamed not her but the Provincial whose foolishness had lost the Carmelites so rare a jewel in their regalia. He immediately hungered to reclaim the convent, and forthwith received Teresa back into the Order which she had abandoned—greatly to the annoyance of the Bishop—promising, however, that in no case should she be required to return to the Encarnacion. Further, in his delight at the rule of St. Joseph,

he gave "the fullest authority in writing to found more monasteries and denounced penalties against the Provincial who should stay my hand."

Having conquered this kingdom, Teresa immediately desired another. It was not sufficient that she should found convents for barefooted nuns. This woman, greatly daring, felt "how necessary it would be to have friars under the same rule; and seeing how very few there were in the province, for they seemed to me to be dying out, I put the matter earnestly before the Lord." Later she did the same service in regard to the General, who despatched forthwith "for he desired to see the strictest observance of the rule practised in the Order, his licence to found two monasteries for Discalced Friars."

Being thus in possession of innumerable permissions, it remained to acquire the means to put such into operation. On this occasion, it will be realised that Teresa asked first and fulfilled later. Experience had taught her that it is more difficult to cope with opposition than to raise money. The latter is child's play

to a spirit at once passionate and sincere. She decided to found her second convent at Medina del Campo. And with that resolution bade farewell to tranquillity of spirit and repose of body.

From that moment till the end of her life, Teresa was a traveller on rough roads, battling with torrid heat and blinding cold, struggling against mean jealousies, petty malice and the unflagging attacks of vested interests—mundane and religious. And throughout her pilgrimage, her preposterous and most glorious crusade, she remained the same simple, lovable woman—incorrigible enthusiast, invulnerable leader, incomparable saint!



## CHAPTER XV

TERESA seized on Medina del Campo as the next stepping stone for her ford of Foundations. The place was already endeared to her by personal association. There was her old confessor, Fr. Baltasar Alvarez, installed as Rector of the Jesuits; Fr. Antonio de Heredia—whom she had known in Avila—was Prior of the Carmelite Convent, and as ever she looked in confident affection to her friends. Alvarez promised to try to win over the town and the Bishop, a difficult matter remembering the monastery was to be reared in poverty. But as she said: “no famine can force us to surrender—it may kill us, it cannot vanquish us.” There was the usual storm of ridicule and malice when the project became known:—

“There was a stir in the city. Some said I was mad; others waited for the end of the folly. The Bishop—so he told me afterwards—thought it a great folly though he did not

say so at the time: my friends told me so fast enough, but I made light of it all, for I looked on that which they thought questionable as so easy that I could not persuade myself to admit it could fail at all."

And yet what a hopeless chance it seemed; without money, without a house—with nothing but her flaming purpose and high courage—to invade yet another city where already the populace laughed and authority frowned.

Fr. Julian de Avila, who went on to prepare the way, obtained the necessary licence from the Carmelite Prior, Fr. Heredia, and, with the help of Alvarez, the permission of the City Fathers to found the convent. Further, he arranged to acquire a house, "the best and most important in Medina," at a yearly rental of 51000 maravedis.\*

Teresa welcomed the news and approved the house, quite unperturbed by her total lack of means, a few inconsiderable coins being all she could collect. On a blazing August day the little company set forth. Teresa, a party of nuns from the Encarnacion who had

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\*About £70 in English money at the present day.

followed her to St. Joseph's, and Julian de Avila, bustling and eager on horseback. The women travelled in a covered cart, quite springless and most comfortless, watched by unfriendly eyes, pursued by wagging tongues. Avila was again indignant. What, not content with setting her native city at defiance, the mad nun must affront fresh fields? Even Salcedo wagged his beard and Father Daza frowned portentously. But opposition could no more weaken than jolting roads could deter her. She set all difficulties aside, putting them with delicious humour on to God: "Lord," she often said, "this business is not mine but thine: if Thou willest it to be done, nothing can oppose Thee, and if not, Thy will be done."

The founding of St. Joseph's of Medina as told by the faithful Julian in his life of the Saint, is a succession of rebuff, achievement, disappointment and sudden dazzling triumph. The first stage of the journey brought the news that the commodious house could not be rented, it was close to the Augustinian monastery, too close in fact—the Fathers did not want a convent so near. This being so, the landlord urged

an immediate retreat to Avila: "remembering what a sensation our departure had caused," says Fr. Julian, "I thought of the laughter and ridicule that would greet our return." In any case, however, Teresa was of no mind to cut short the journey. She merely split up her forces. Three of the more timorous nuns were despatched to the care of a neighbouring parish priest, and the other two with Teresa and Fr. Julian continued on the road. At the first stopping place Teresa learnt that a large tumbledown dwelling in Medina was available and that Heredia was negotiating for it. She clinched the matter in an interview with the owner, a pious widow, who gave permission for the house to be used together with any furniture or tapestries remaining, and the party in high spirits proceeded. Hear Fr. Julian on what happened:—

"It was late in the evening when we reached Olmedo, where the Bishop welcomed us heartily and gave the Mother a coach for the rest of the journey, sending with us one of his chaplains, an excellent priest named Munoz. We started again that evening, confident of success.

I went on first to announce our arrival to the Carmelite Fathers. There was I, at midnight, thundering at their door until at last they awoke and opened it to me. When I told them my business and that the Mother was there, they set about preparing that very night so that at daybreak next morning the convent might be founded in the widow's house. Then our Mother arrived, and as in such cases she acted with decision we took with us the vestments and altar furniture required for Mass, and without further delay started on foot—nuns, priests, the prior, and three other friars. We went through the outskirts of the city as it was the hour for driving the bulls through the streets for the bull-fights next day. Laden as we were, we looked like *gitanos* who had been robbing a church. Had a watchman met us, without more ado he would have taken us off to prison until it was known where the troop of priests, friars and nuns were going at such a time. But would they have believed the word of such a set of people, found wandering about the town in the middle of the night? Persons of the kind are generally the scum of the neighbourhood. God willed that those we met were not watchmen and let us pass with the kind of remarks to be expected from them. We dared not answer but hurried on, taking no notice."

All night long the valiant Mother and her daughter laboured until "at daybreak nothing remained to be done except to make another attack, this time on the Provisor's house, to get him to send a notary as witness that the convent was founded with the permission and blessing of our ecclesiastical superior." And what a convent! Only one room was habitable, the roof let water, the walls gaped, it was a skeleton of a house which only genius could have clothed; "the necessary preparations were made, an altar was set up, and some sort of chapel arranged handsomely draped with tapestry, although the night was so dark we could not tell whether the chapel stood inside the house or out. . . . The rest of the house was in ruins, and the Blessed Sacrament almost in the street."

Well might the people of Medina, aroused at daybreak by the ringing of the convent bell for the first Mass, stand dumfounded. Since the previous night, what had been accomplished? A party of raggle-taggle nuns had possessed themselves of a broken-down ruin and set up a house of God! It was an heroic



accomplishment but Theresa, seeing the work of her hands, was plunged into despondency. Once more she was frightened at what she had done—how would her daughters live, where find shelter?

The inevitable champion who always seemed to wait on Teresa's black moods in due course appeared—a wealthy merchant offered the upper part of a large house where the nuns could live in security. At the same time Fr. Heredia enlisted money for the reconstruction of the convent building, and a wealthy woman, niece of the Archbishop of Toledo, undertook to endow the chapel and provide furniture and all necessities for the nuns. This started the ball rolling, and alms poured in at such a rate that before she left Medina, Teresa was able to endow a chaplain, purchase his house, and spend on it and the chapel thousands of maravedis—and this the woman who had left Avila in possession of a handful of pesedas!

It was at Medina that she met that strange ethereal creature, John of the Cross. Divorced from the flesh and fleshly things, there burned in him a transcendental fire, a spiritual white


light that awed humanity and all but chilled it. Teresa saw and recognised his power and joined it to her aim. Her warm and glowing nature, rich as the earth and as enduring, took hands with many and diverse persons, absorbing their talents, using their genius, inspiring their souls. She had a tenderness for John, his slight pathetic figure always brought a smile to her eyes. She called him and Heredia—tall and stately—her “friar and a half” and very faithfully did they both serve her.

It was during her stay at St. Joseph’s of Medina that she planned her next campaign. As always, while her brain schemed and plotted, her hands were busy. She swept and scrubbed, dusted and polished, waiting with particular assiduity on the nuns who had followed her from the Encarnacion. In vain the Sisters tried to dissuade her, she smiled and put them to the rout: “Daughters, do not make me to be idle in the house of the Lord.” And all the while she was pondering how to found her first monastery of friars, for which she had already received permission from the General.

With this project, John of the Cross closely

allied himself. He saw the vision and found it good. At the moment, however, the time was not yet ripe, and Teresa, who had an uncanny instinct for the propitious hour, postponed the salvation of Discalced Friars and continued to found convents.

From Medina by long and weary stages, through wild forests and bleak plains, Teresa, with two faithful nuns, journeyed to Alcala and from thence to Malagon. Her crusade was no longer cause for scandal; she and her perpetual poverty were facts accomplished which left little or nothing much to say. Indeed the wheel had swung full circle almost, and in place of laughter she was greeted with reverence and applause. Her exploits were talked of at the Court, Philip II, crafty ascetic, dour libertine, held her in awe and praised her name. Teresa accepted popularity as she endured abuse, with a shrug of the shoulders. Her head was too firmly set to be turned by flattery. She was too passionately keen on the idea to be moved by enthusiasm at fulfilment. But already legend had started, and tales of her visions and ecstasies, austerities and mortifications were babbled



everywhere. She was regarded indeed, not only as a great Saint, but as a possible performer. Thus on arriving at Madrid at the house of a great lady, Teresa found all the fashionable wealth of feminine society gathered together in the hope of a miracle—or at least a rapture! To their chagrin, the nun, in the most charming manner, plunged into the amiable platitudes of good society—the beauties of the city, the warmth of the weather—until the beruffled visitors, all farthingaled and perfumed, withdrew discomfited. And yet so strong is personality, she held their imagination; they remembered the shabby old nun with the courtly manner long after the enraptured mystic would have been forgotten.

At Alcala she renewed her friendship with Maria de Jesus, and helped that indomitable woman to reconstruct the convent she had walked barefoot to found. Under the constitution laid down for the nuns at Avila, peace and order flourished, and when Teresa left the community was settled. There in the same convent, under the same rules, Carmelite Sisters live unto this day.

It was about Eastertide in 1568 that she visited Toledo, where she was joined by her old admirer, Doña Luisa de la Cerda. Together they went, accompanied by nuns and servants, to Malagon, where Doña Luisa owned a castle, there to found a convent. The convent was founded and without difficulty; Doña Luisa's wealth and influence smoothed the way. But as poor Teresa so often found, what she was spared in material pains she suffered in spiritual tribulation. The building rose by magic; the chapel glowed like a jewel; novices of wealth and station hastened to profess their vows. She did not want their wealth, was indifferent to their station, but who was she to refuse their souls? And yet what else remained for her to do? Doña Luisa refused to help with the Foundation unless it was endowed. Malagon was too tiny and too poor a place to supply alms and the convent would perish. The choice narrowed down to endowment or no Foundation, in which case the novices would have to enter convents lacking the austerity, the devotion of the Discalced. Malagon was a wild and desolate spot and Teresa, far from her old friends, con-

sulted the good Banes, who very frankly told her not to be a fool. And so, in doubt and great unhappiness, she yielded; but to a small endowment only, and not a penny to be controlled by any individual nun or any member of her family. From this last determination she would not secede; I think that all her life she regretted giving way at all. And yet, remembering what was at stake, how should she take the burden or refusal?

Alas! that the *imprimatur* of success must always tarnish what it crowns. No wonder that with each successive notable Foundation Teresa longed more deeply and more hungrily for the House of God in Avila—the tiny house girt round with poverty's strong wall.

Valladolid followed in quick succession to Malagon. A young noble who had fallen under Teresa's spell left in his will a house and grounds for a Foundation of the Reform Order. The house—a mansion, Teresa calls it—did not please her. It was too affluent and yet too sickly. Nevertheless, the nuns moved in only to be stricken with disease. For a moment Teresa was discomfited. The next, up and doing, she



discovered a wealthy benefactress who undertook to buy a new house and to find all things essential. Thus before the year was over another link was added to the chain of poverty—ever so little modified—and the Convent of the Conception of Our Lady of Carmel was in being.

And now Teresa braced herself in a supreme effort to realise her most cherished dream and found a monastery for Discalced Friars. She chose Duruelo as the appointed spot, where John of the Cross was already waiting for her. Things moved quickly; Teresa, through his sister's influence, roped in the Bishop of Toledo, the Jesuit Provincial and the Dominican both came to heel and a devout son of the Church placed his house at her disposal. With John of the Cross worked the dignified Prior Heredia, who, resigning his office, retired to Duruelo under the name of Antonio de Jesus. Teresa always called the monastery the "little gateway of Bethlehem" and its memory brought her a tender joy:—

"When I came into the church I was amazed to see the devotion the Lord had placed there

... I never forget a little wooden cross which contained holy water; whereon was pasted a paper image of Christ, which seemed to inspire more devotion than if it had been of elaborate workmanship."

All through this year of wearing activity, the old sickness, the faintness and the racking pains of her youth came back. Teresa never mentions these except to thank her friends for their inquiries, and as though conscious that time was all too short for what she had to do, steadfastly refused to put off a journey, no matter what she suffered. And indeed her exceeding joy at Duruelo must have wiped out recollection of mere pain. To what a pass had she attained; a mere woman, as Spain held her, had driven a wedge into masculine pride, and in the teeth of national prejudice raised a standard to which men of all ages and all stations flocked. It was perhaps the moment of her career which held for her the purest satisfaction. The Lord had promised and He had fulfilled; exalting the humble and meek. As yet, however, the mighty were not put down, but merely

strengthened in their seats. The declension was to come later.

There followed the foundations of Toledo, Pastrana and Alba de Tormes. At Pastrana the first seeds of a fruitful crop of treachery were sown. Teresa and her company, nuns recruited from St. Joseph of Avila and the faithful Julian, were housed in the Palace of the Princess of Eboli, a beautiful creature of untamed courage and strong passions, the heiress of the powerful Mendozas, an object of envy to the King himself. The Princess, immensely taken with Teresa, asked perpetually to be allowed to read her "Life." Teresa instinctively shrank from the idea, but fearful lest refusal should affect the chances of the convent, at last unwillingly consented. Having won her way, the Princess grew indifferent, not only to the MS., but also to her promise as to secrecy concerning its contents. She left the book lying about, so that the very servants read it, and Teresa's "visions" and "ecstasies" became the subject of irreverent laughter. Later the "Life" mysteriously disappeared, sent, rumour has

it, in a fit of temper by the Princess to the Inquisition. The result simmered for a while and then boiled over, as we shall see. Meanwhile, the Princess, lavishly generous, found money, house and equipment for the Foundation and then, with the freakishness of her type, destroyed all she had done by unwarrantable interference. She demanded that Teresa should receive a novice of whom she did not approve; finding the Saint immovable upon the point, she withdrew her support and left Teresa to manage as she could. Our heroine accepted the challenge and, after many and fruitless efforts, opened the Convent of Our Lady of the Conception.

Some four days later came a summons that thrilled her to the soul. The Prior of Medina requested her to give the habit of the Reform Order to three friars who had founded a monastery poor as St. Joseph's of Avila on a bleak hillside of Pastrana. Dear and tiny gardens of the soul, in quietness and austerity they nourished soldiers of the Lord whom Teresa loved. Always she turned to those little places, high altars of exceeding poverty, and purity of thought.

Alba de Tormes rounded off the first chapter of Teresa's crusade. In Alba she visited the Palace of the Duchess, where she was dazzled by the treasure chamber with its "infinite kinds of glass and pottery." The convent established, she returned to Toledo, where she wrote innumerable letters and some of the most wonderful of her "Relations." She stayed there for a year, visiting the beloved Foundations of Valladolid and Medina from time to time.

It was at Medina that the thundercloud of opposition gradually formed. The Provincial, jealous of the Reform, had insisted on his right of appointing a Prioress. Teresa and her nuns were equally firm as to their right of electing one, as provided in the constitution. Whereat the chosen Prioress ordered Teresa to leave the convent, which, in spite of a raging snow-storm, she immediately did, arriving with one faithful daughter at the gates of St. Joseph of Avila.

It was to her a homecoming most precious after the clamour of Medina. But she was not long allowed to enjoy her peace. Fr. Pedro Fernandez, newly appointed Visitor to the

Carmelite convents, summoned her to take charge of the nuns at Medina in place of the disgruntled Prioress, who had incontinently left. The nuns eagerly seconded Fernandez's choice, and a quiet settled on the community, from which Teresa was untimely plucked. She was ordered to the Encarnacion, there as Prior-ess to reduce chaos to order, under a steady discipline.

It was the hardest thing she had been called to do. In the heyday of fulfilment she was condemned to inactivity for three long years. Meanwhile the menace of the storm against her Discalced sons and daughters grew nearer. It was shortly about to break.



## CHAPTER XVI

It is always a difficult moment when the creator of an idea realises that, for its practical development, it is necessary to appoint a lieutenant. The most promising schemes have been wrecked by an unwise selection, the most admirable projects ruined for want of efficient aid. Teresa's reform had passed from the world of women to that of men. So far as her nuns were concerned, she could control the actual interpretation of her rule. It was a different matter for the friars. She could give them the word of life, she could not assist in its objective manifestation.

Very much hung on her choice.

The Order of the Mitigated Carmelites, old-established, wealthy, with a mellow reputation, were up in arms against her as an interloper. So long as she confined herself to the establishment of convents, frontal attack was

difficult. Now, however, by the foundation of monasteries she had thrown down a gage that ninety-nine per cent. of the monks and friars burnt to accept. All these considerations were present to Teresa's mind. She realised that the vested interests of age and property were against her. It was essential, therefore, that the man who led the battle must stand for faith and poverty, with fresh enthusiasm and ideas. He must have nothing material to lose and everything spiritual to gain. Moreover, he must be keen-brained, logical, untiring. Above all, he must be moved with a great love of humanity, possess understanding, and have tolerance. She found these qualities in Father Gracian, who had taken the habit at St. Joseph's of Pastrana. A vivid figure with great gifts of eloquence, amazing scholarship and personal charm, Gracian responded to Teresa's influence with eager gratitude. Generous but hot-headed, his temperament made him an excellent second, but as commander-in-chief he was inadequate. But whatever he lacked as a leader—patience, sagacity, resolution and unfailing tact—in one thing he never faltered, his loyalty to the

woman who gave him her friendship and his chance.

One can see the subtle strength of Teresa reaching to Gracian's indecision. She poured out her experience unstintingly, gave him of her knowledge, counselled him with an exquisite humility that after all these years remains fragrant and wistful. Lest he, a young man, should be discounted for seeking the advice of an old woman, she took a vow of obedience always to bend her will to his. Her choice undoubtedly roused jealousy, but in any case this was inevitable. Besides, who else could have filled the bill? John of the Cross was too divorced from earth to battle with the powers of the world; Fr. Antonio was too eclectic; and her other adherents lacked the vigour and the mentality of Gracian. Something, perhaps, of her own qualities she read into him. She was always prone to credit her friends with the genius she herself possessed; but apart from this, she recognised in Gracian the expression of a generation different from her own, which with full-hearted hospitality she welcomed. She writes of him with the swift appraisal

and undulled enthusiasm that are the everlasting flowers of inborn graciousness. Thus to Ines de Jesus, Prioress of Medina:—

“O my Mother! How I wish you had been with me during the last few days, which without exaggeration have seemed the happiest of my life! The Father Master Gracian has been with us for over three weeks, and I assure you that much as I have seen of him, I have not yet appreciated his full worth. . . . What you and all the Sisters must do now is to entreat God to make him our superior; then I could lay aside the burden of governing these houses, for I have never seen perfection combined with such gentleness.”

It was that same gentleness—irresolution, one may call it—devoid of the fibre of decision, the iron streak that tempered Teresa’s sunny gold, which was the secret of poor Gracian’s failure.

Teresa’s meeting with her champion was at Veas in 1575, after the three years of her office as Prioress in the Encarnacion. It had been a weary period. The decision of Fernandez to send her to reorganise the convent had cut short her work in mid-career. Moreover, Teresa,

like all crusaders, always preferred to move forward rather than back: it must have seemed a long way back to the Encarnacion. She was greeted by open rebellion. Indeed, for fear lest the Sisters should literally take arms against her, she was accompanied, by the Provincial's instructions, by two monks. But Teresa had other methods of establishing control. She met the nuns as Prioress in the same fashion that she had faced them as penitent. She sympathised with their chagrin at the appointment of one so unworthy, and craved their pardon in that she, all unwilling, had been sent to rule them. The meeting broke up, surprised but not assuaged. That was left to the next morning. Legend has it that when the Sisters came to chapel, they behold Our Lady in the seat of the Prioress with Teresa at her feet. Complete surrender followed, with an entire reconstruction of the convent, spiritually and materially. Finances were overhauled, the administration was altered. The Encarnacion grew from chaos to content; the bodies of the Sisters were duly, if poorly fed, and John of the Cross, appointed confessor, dealt with their spiritual needs.

Meanwhile events in the outside world were moving quickly. Teresa out of the way—fighting none the less effectively and unremittingly with her pen—the Mitigated Carmelites brought pressure to bear on the Pope, the General and the King. Somehow these pestilential foundations had to be suppressed, else where would they end?

Fernandez and Vargas, appointed by Rome as visitors to the Carmelite Order, were keenly in favour of the Reform. They desired, indeed, to spread the doctrines of the Discalced throughout Spain. In Castille, under Fernandez, much had been done. In Andalusia, where Vargas was visitor, the Reform had not penetrated. This, as we know, was due to the ruling of Rubeo, the General, who, in chagrin at the recalcitrance he had met in the province, had expressly forbidden Teresa to make foundations here. Vargas, however, found a way to get round the objection.

Now the Prior of Pastrana, Baltasar de Jesus, had originally belonged to the Mitigation; when, therefore, he paid a visit to Andalusia, of which he was a native, Vargas saw in



him an ideal instrument; he would at once conciliate the Mitigated and carry the confidence of the people. To this end Vargas delegated to him the powers received from the Pope, and made him visitor with power over all the houses of the Reform that should be made in Andalusia. The plan worked admirably and the monasteries of Granada and Penuela were founded. Then came the riposte. The friars of the old observance made a great outcry, complaining that they who had grown grey in the service of the Lord, were by implication accused of laxity. They branded Baltasar as renegade, and, frightened lest they should be brought under the Reform, sent petitions and complaints direct to Vargas. The latter, realising he had pushed the Reform too hard, changed his tactics. The Mitigated should no longer complain that he used seceders. In future he would choose friars who had made their original vows to the New Carmel. He wrote, therefore, to Fray Mariano, a burning zealot, who had entered Pastrana as a lay brother, asking his assistance in the good work. Mariano joyfully agreed to come to Andalusia and arranged for Gracian to

accompany him. This was made easy by the return of Baltasar who, very definitely resolved not to return to Andalusia, was anxious for others to take his place. Further, the Provincial, our old friend Angel de Salazar, having no suspicion of their mission, cheerfully gave them leave to go. On the road fate played into their hands. At Toledo, where they put up for the night, Mariano found a message from the General awaiting him, with instructions to be ordained forthwith. Thus Vargas had the co-operation of two priests instead of one, and rejoiced accordingly.

Gracian won immediate approval as an apostle of fire and fervour, and Vargas appointed him delegate, vesting him with full authority, not only over the houses of the Discalced, but also of the Mitigation. Here, then, were all the essentials of a pretty conflagration. A Discalced in authority over the Mitigation in Andalusia—where the Reform was forbidden to come. The genius of Teresa might have weathered the storm—she had controlled worse upheavals—but she, alas! was far away battling with the Encarnacion.

Gracian, with an outburst of undue zeal, contrived to set Andalusia alight. Armed with the original letters of the Pope giving his representatives full authority, he went from foundation to foundation, "reforming" Mitigated monasteries between-whiles. He carried things with so high a hand that for the moment the old Order kept quiet—biding their time; and his energy subsiding—poor Gracian was always in extremes—he settled down quietly in the Discalced monastery at Seville, preaching by order of the Archbishop, who wanted to preserve peace in his diocese, wonderful Lenten sermons in the cathedral.

The next move came from Teresa. Her weary term of office over, after a short stay at St. Joseph's of Avila, she set out on a long and adventurous pilgrimage—the hardest, most heart-rending of all. From every side came requests that she should make foundations, and unimpressed by continued and most serious illness, she joyfully gave herself up to the task. She was sixty-three now, remember, tried by mortification—she was never more humorous or light-hearted than when she had scourged

herself for hours—weakened by fasts. But she would not listen to the longing for repose—on and on and on, her intrepid spirit forever advanced—always another and another goal.

✱ Veas at the moment claimed her attention, and she set out for the city with the same tremulous hope and unquenchable faith that had inspired her first house in Avila. Now Veas was in Andalusia, a fact which did not impress itself on Teresa's mind. After all, even genius cannot be all-knowing, and the only way effectively to use one's memory is to decide what to forget. Geography was not our heroine's strong point; moreover, she had at times a large and generous carelessness of detail. She heard of Veas—its need of a Foundation. And so in imagination she was there—the convent built—opened—and imbued with the spirit of her Lord.

Thus indeed it fell out. But barely was St. Joseph de Salvador founded than the battle was joined. Teresa could not stem the conflict. That which she had created with blood and tears had grown outside herself. The Re-

form was brought to trial; only its inborn strength and purity could uphold it.

The Mitigated Carmelites seized on the opportunity created by Veas and complained to Rubeo the General. Teresa tried to assuage him by a tactful letter, but Father Gracian, riding at the top of the wave, did not trouble to follow her example. His rashness—in perpetual alternation with easy-going amiability—antagonised the General, thus strengthening opposition to the Reform. The Inquisition, like well-trained hounds, scented their prey and pounced on Teresa's "Life." Mortified by the indifference which Gracian and Mariano had shown him, egged on by the Mitigated and watched by the Inquisition, Rubeo called a Chapter of the whole Carmelite Order at Piacenza in the Duchy of Parma. Here he sprung a mine on the Discalced; he produced Papal briefs recalling the powers granted to Fernandez and Vargas, and the assembled fathers decreed, first, the expulsion of the barefooted friars from the three houses founded in Andalusia, and second, the suppression of all Discalced con-

vents founded without the General's specific permission. Fray Jerome Tostado, a Portuguese, was despatched to carry out the decrees. He came to Spain, fully convinced of the danger of the new Carmel and determined to destroy it!

Meanwhile Teresa was not left without help. The Papal Nuncio, Monsignore Ormaneto, always sympathetic with the Reform, regarded its suppression with alarm. He decided to counter the appointment of Tostado, and before his arrival not only re-affirmed Gracian as Visitor to Andalusia, but made him Provincial of the Discalced with authority to propagate the Reform both in Andalusia and Castille. Gracian set to work as quickly as possible overhauling the monasteries with such efficiency that the Mitigated friars rose in revolt and denounced him as a rebel against the General. Teresa—she generally had the secular clergy on her side—with the Nuncio's help and her own diplomacy, which counselled Gracian to patience and tact, stayed off the crisis. But nothing could ultimately avert the clash of opposing factions, the old order of mitigated discomfort,



ameliorated poverty, the new rule of bodily austerity and spiritual exaltation. That Gracian drove the Reform too hard is undoubted. But it is given to few to have Teresa's tender resolution, and even under her guidance the clash must have come. The immediate point of attack, however, was shifted from Gracian to Teresa herself. She was the well-spring of the Reform, and as such must be segregated.

At the end of the year an order was passed by the General Chapter of the Order, still in session, forbidding her to make any more Foundations, and confining her within the particular convent she decided to select as a place of residence, which, as she said, "was something like sending me to prison." Salazar, the Provincial of Castille, brought her this pleasant little Christmas gift; but having learnt something of the Saint's methods he decided that though vanquished to-day, she would inevitably rise again to-morrow, for which reason he gave her permission to delay her choice, and it was not till the following June that she went to Toledo.

And now Tostado, having landed, the ding-

dong of the fight resounded once again; so soon as Gracian "reformed" a monastery on the authority of the Nuncio, his work was undone by a Provincial of the Mitigation acting for Tostado. Matters came to a head in Seville when, following on a re-shuffling of authority for the second time, the Mitigation rose in full cry denouncing Gracian, the friars, the nuns and our Teresa, foundress of the Discalced, with a flood of foul invective. Nothing was too small, too vile to be hurled at her. She was accused of seeking the society of gallants; of sadistic practices upon her nuns, of sins from which her age itself should have protected her. And meanwhile untouchable in her serenity, she remained at St. Joseph's of Toledo, writing perhaps the most spiritual as the most exquisite of all her books, "The Interior Castle," in which she traces the progress of the soul through many mansions to its final home.

And then in 1577 the Reform was dealt a crashing blow from which it did not easily recover. Ormaneto the Nuncio, kindly old man and firm friend of the Discalced, died; whereat the fury of Tostado—we are assured

by modern commentators that he was actuated by "the greatest spiritual zeal"—was unleashed. Alas! for Teresa's vision of peaceful worship, her poor friars had to hide themselves in nooks and crannies of the wilderness to escape ecclesiastical damnation and an unpleasant form of death!

Teresa, who had been permitted to return to St. Joseph's of Avila, at this point appealed to the King. She chose her ground with consummate skill, none of your tearful pleading, your womanish anguish. She asked for a decision from the Royal Council concerning Gracian's commission from the late Nuncio. The Council reported that, though dead, Ormaneto's act was still valid, and that the "visitation" of Andalusia could be continued. This meant the defeat of Tostado, who gave up the contest and retired in dudgeon to Rome.

The Reform began to breathe again, but easy respiration was suspended by the appointment of a Nuncio hostile to the Discalced and incurably envenomed against Teresa. It was the old story: she was a woman, therefore inferior to man: a nun, therefore subject to her confessor. Instead of which she went about founding

convents and outraging comfortable rules. Time and more than time this wild incendiary were suppressed.

Sega did not wait long. He called on Gracian as his superior to resign authority as visitor. This Gracian flatly refused to do. He was upheld by the decision of the Royal Council, and, though audacious, he might have sustained his audacity. But that unhappy vacillation that at times descended on him paralysed his will. Sega, having appointed visitors in Gracian's stead—all of the Mitigation—despatched them to Pastrana to demand complete submission. They thundered at the gate—that Gate of Bethlehem which Teresa loved—calling on Gracian to surrender.

Now was the test of the man's mettle. Mariano counselled defiance—they had the Royal warrant at their back, moreover Sega, as an Italian, was not in favour at the Court; Spain had small use for interfering foreigners. Gracian, however, grew panicky. He did not wait for the Mitigation to force an entry, but himself opened the gates, delivered up the King's warrant and abased himself in abject

humiliation to the representative of the Nuncio. One is not at all surprised, nor even sorry, that he was taken off to prison, where he languished for a considerable time. The triumph of the Mitigation was assured, the Discalced were put to the rout.

Persecution did not even stop at the friars. Teresa's unhappy daughters were taken before the Inquisition and closely cross-examined. But even these smellers out of heresy could find nothing on which to convict. Indeed, the Grand Inquisitor himself, moved to admiration, informed Teresa that her "Life" had been judged orthodox and that she need not fear its committal to the flames. Apart from the Inquisition, the nuns had an unpleasant time with Segá, who ordered them to drop the rule of the Reform and accept the Mitigated discipline; the majority paid not the least heed!

Teresa, from St. Joseph's in Avila, dealt daily with a mass of correspondence, advising, strengthening her daughters—at all costs they must provide no occasion for criticism, avoid any appearance of fault. And always in her soul there burnt the sure and certain hope that

her Lord would protect His Houses raised in honour of His name. Her letters show incredible tenderness and fortitude, though affairs were in a bad way at the convent, and on Christmas Eve she fell and broke her arm.

The sun still sulked behind the clouds and Segá pursued his destruction with increased zest. John of the Cross, arrested at St. Joseph's of Avila, was thrown into a dungeon and so cruelly flogged by order of the devout Nuncio that his shoulders bore the marks of laceration until his death. Mariano was imprisoned and deprived of the right to hear Mass—all Teresa's faithful followers were marked down for violence. The Discalced friars, goaded to action, held a secret Chapter, in which it was decided to separate from the Mitigated, and they were heavily punished for their pains. Segá insisted he would tread out the pestilent Reform root and branch; and Rubeo, the General, did not lift a finger to save it. Many were the letters that Teresa sent him but he turned a deaf ear. She realised that, if her sons and daughters were to be saved, she must try other means.



By this time, 1579, the Court, the clergy and the people were tired of Segá's methods. After all, what had the Discalced done? It might be mad, but it certainly was not wicked to wish to live poorly and in prayer? Our heroine, feeling the pulse of the times, chose the opportunity to urge her supporters at Madrid to take action. One of these, the Count of Tendilla, was attached to the King. Tendilla and his wife had given generously to the Reform and, indignant at the Nuncio's venomous campaign, he taunted the Italian with his dislike of purity and poverty. Segá, hot-foot, complained to the King, who received him coldly and suggested a close examination of the Nuncio's conscience. By this time also Rome was moving. The Discalced, it seemed, had been so persecuted that Spain was being roused to revolt. It was time a truce was called. The Nuncio—despicable little man—grew frightened. He appointed four assessors to inquire into the Reform, and feeling Teresa was too high a mark for reprisal, vented his spite on Gracian, who was again thrown into prison.

Teresa, in the midst of all these buffets,

never lost heart. Don Diego de Yepes, one of her biographers, marvels at her confidence. In Toledo, with the storm at its height, when Gracian—poor weakling—was in the depths, and even Mariano was distressed, she smiled and said quite simply: “We have much to suffer, but the Order will not be destroyed.”

And at last the Saint—for it was her fortitude and faith, her high confidence and embattled courage, that gave her victory—won through. The assessors reported in favour of the Discalced, and in 1581, by order of the Pope, the Reform was severed—I hope eternally—from the Mitigated. At a Chapter held at Alcala, the election of Provincial for the Discalced took place. The choice fell upon Gracian; well might Teresa, in all the warmth of happiness and comfort, praise her Lord.

Can you not hear this brave old woman, weighted with years, no longer slender and exquisite, but indomitable in her flaming faith and embattled courage, sing her *Te Deum*?

But the end was not yet; there were still many adventurous miles for her to travel.

## CHAPTER XVII

THE end of Teresa's pilgrimage drew near. During the persecution—when its immediate fury had abated—some eleven foundations of the Reform were made, each with its separate and distinct difficulty and pain. Of these foundations, six were convents, four opened by the Mother herself, the remaining two—Caravaca and Granada—under her supervision, because she was forbidden to be there.

It was in April, 1582, that she made her last Foundation at Burgos.

Some six years before, certain Jesuits, "men of great godliness, learning and spirituality, said to me that it would be a great service rendered to our Lord if a house of this holy order were founded in Burgos." At the time, the persecution prevented the foundation, but Teresa remembered her promise and though "I had been very ill, so that it was thought I

could not live," she made a superhuman effort to fulfil her word. She was ever a fighter, and the final jewel of her achievement was won for her Lord in the teeth of difficulties as keen and bitter as those that had confronted her at Avila.

At one time her extreme weakness, the biting cold, the anguish that at times confronts the bravest spirit, tempted her to remain at Avila—"the Prioress of Palencia would do as well. . . ."

"Whilst I was thinking this, being determined, if possible, not to go, the Lord said to me: 'Fear not the cold, for I am the true heat. The devil puts forth all his strength to prevent this foundation; put forth all Mine for Me to accomplish it, and fail not to go in person, for it will be of great benefit.'"

Her frail body, her quivering limbs, responded to the spur. In an icy cold, so extreme that it brought back a return of the nervous paralysis from which she suffered, she started. Alas! what troubles awaited her. A pestilential Archbishop; he of Palencia, refused the license for the Foundation and held up the proceedings, further delayed by the difficulty of finding a

suitable house. Before the trials of Burgos, however, she tasted one of those fugitive triumphs which are given to the great ones of the earth, generally in preparation for humiliation and defeat. Those triumphs were dearly paid for by our heroine. The moments when as in a crystal the force of genius is revealed, the breathless space when the slow bud bursts into flower, come not as miraculous creations, but by the slow, laborious effort of untold hours. Patience, forbearance—ah, what forbearance!—sleepless vigilance, bitter tears, and cries of infinite distress. And yet it is good to know that when Teresa entered the old town, the people lined the roads, crowding for her blessing, reaching to touch her garments. She rose to the call; but she was deathly ill—so ill that they urged her to give up Burgos and remain at Palencia.

The roads were flooded, the bridges swept away, a sea of mud spread over the country. But Teresa, wan but invincible, would not remain, and the cavalcade set forth. When the rough carts in which they travelled broke down, they took to the boats. On one occasion,

having been grievously hurt with a bad upset, Teresa was moved to remonstrate with her Lord: "Why," she asked, "should I, who am doing Your work, be so badly treated?" "Thus," was the answer, "do I treat My friends." Whereat the Saint responded: "No wonder, then, you have so few." And legend has it that the waters immediately subsided.

It was a weary time: floods and storm and lack of means and foolish ecclesiastics all united against her. But, as ever, she won through, and before she left Burgos the Convent of the Glorious St. Joseph of St. Anne was in being, and—miracle of miracles!—remained intact though the waters engulfed it even to its spire.

And then, the last Foundation made, the saint turned her eyes toward beloved Avila. Her spirit fainted for the peace of the poor house her love had made. But it was not meant that she should die at home. Neither was it ordained that the road should be made easy. But what had ease to do with Teresa? Her soul, like a keen sword, flashed silver-bright in conflict, and to the last breath of life she fought.



By this time she was accepted by the Church and by the people, but in proportion to the recognition accorded her outside the Reform, the estimation of those within grew jaundiced. This did not hold good with the friars. They remained her most devoted and most sacrificial followers. As might be expected, it was her daughters who gave trouble. The usual thing happened. Under the stress of opposition the nuns united in loyalty to their foundress. The pressure released, they relapsed into the petty criticism, the interior doubt that spreads disaffection like fire. Women are seldom consecutively loyal to a leader of their own sex, and these poor nuns, who so devotedly had served their Mother, were already loosening their allegiance. There is a curious significance in this last journey of Teresa's, not a pang was spared her, nothing which could wound her fell back. She was pierced with a thousand spears, individual and most cruelly sharp. At Valladolid the Prioress, her niece Maria, flouted her opinion, cold-shouldered her authority, and the nuns followed suit. Her family also at this point took occasion for attack. Lorenzo, who, return-

ing from the Indies, had devoted himself to Teresa and the Reform, had died, leaving his fortune at his sister's disposal. Whereat all the Cepeda rose up in arms. Insulting letters were followed by personal attacks from the family lawyer. And this while the broken arm was giving her agony and her heart was steadily giving out. And yet she had the courage and the dignity to deliver a farewell message which must, I think, have stabbed some hearts:—

“My daughters, I leave this house greatly consoled by the perfection I see in it; and the poverty and the charity you bear one another; and if it continues as it does now, our Lord will help you greatly. Let each one do her utmost that through her not a single imperfection enters into the perfection of the Order. . . . Do not let your prayers become a mere habit, but day by day make heroic acts of still greater perfection. . . . Pray for great desires, for out of them great benefits may spring.”

At Medina she found the same sullen antagonism; not until she reached Alba was she encompassed by the love which all her life she had so beautifully given out. She had longed to return to Avila, but the Duchess of Alba,

expecting the birth of a child, clamoured for the comfort of the Saint. Moreover, she had asked the Provincial to further her demand—and when did Salazar refuse a Duchess? Teresa therefore was met at Medina by Fr. Antonio, who, shocked at her appearance, was nevertheless constrained to take her to the palace. Before her arrival, however, the Duchess was safely confined, and Teresa, with a spark of her old humour, thanked God she was no longer needed!

At St. Joseph's—one of her first foundations—she rallied, and with a smile permitted the ministrations of her daughters. She owned she was tired, and gladly let them put her to bed. But the next morning she was up and doing and for another eight days she carried out the routine of the convent—inspecting the offices, counselling the nuns, driving her weakness with unflagging will. And then on the ninth day she failed. She recognised that death was coming, and with infinite tenderness told her devoted nurse, Ana de San Bartolome, the companion of her journey, that the end was near. All sorts and kinds of hideous remedies

were administered, she suffered every one with patience, even gratitude. And then she told them to take her to the chapel, and before the altar she lay for a day and a night. The long road was winding to its close; life's glorious adventure would soon give place to death's discoveries. She waited for the moment, I do not doubt, with the same breathless expectancy that greeted all her joys and sorrows. Later the Holy Sacrament was brought to her cell, and suddenly by her own strength she rose from her bed, crying out: "O my Lord, the longed-for hour has come at last; now we shall see one another." After that she lay quiet.

Fr. Antonio, knowing her love of Avila, asked if she would wish to be buried there or in Alba de Tormes. The same indomitable, whimsical woman we have known and loved replied: "Will they not give me here a little earth?"

She did not speak again, nor did she suffer. Quietly and with infinite gentleness life gave her to death—and death to life everlasting. Between nine and ten o'clock on October the 3rd, 1582, Teresa de Jesus died; but her faith,

her courage, her indomitable love, her passionate sacrifice are with us still—her words are winged with the swift sympathy, high ecstasy and indomitable purpose that woke the world with a clarion call, stir us, ay even us, to-day.



The beatification of St. Teresa took place in 1614. She was canonised with Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier eight years later.

THE END














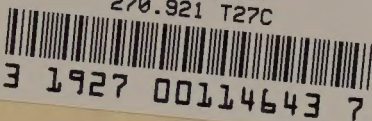


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